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Ryon C. McDermott

August, 2012

TESTING A STRUCTURAL MODEL OF COLLEGE MEN'S INTIMATE PARTNER  
VIOLENCE ATTITUDES: RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULT ATTACHMENT  
DIMENSIONS AND MASCULINE GENDER ROLE STRAIN

A Dissertation presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

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### Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious public health concern. In the past 30 years, certain theoretical conceptualizations of IPV offenders have provided frameworks for understanding why some men commit partner violence. Contemporary expansions of early Feminist theories suggest that men's IPV toward women is related to traditional masculine gender roles and the psychological distress resulting from rigid adherence to such roles (i.e., gender role strain; Pleck, 1981, 1995). At the same time, a wide body of literature has examined attachment theory in relation to IPV in men, suggesting that insecure attachment is more prominent in partner abusive men than non-abusive men. The present study extended previous research by examining the combined contributions of adult attachment dimensions (e.g., anxiety and avoidance) and gender role strain toward the prediction of physical, sexual, and psychological violence acceptance attitudes in a large sample of college men ( $N = 419$ ). Results of preliminary analyses revealed that attitudes of accepting the use of physical violence were severely skewed and, as such, were not included in the final analysis. Results of Structural Regression analyses indicated that the relationship between attachment anxiety and acceptance of sexual and psychological violence in relationships was fully mediated by men's gender role strain. However, the relationship between attachment avoidance and acceptance of sexual and psychological IPV was partially mediated by men's gender role strain. These findings suggest that insecure men may rigidly adhere to stereotypically masculine ways of

thinking, feeling, and behaving. In turn, such rigid adherence increases the likelihood of believing it is acceptable to use sexual and psychological violence in relationships.

Results and implications for IPV prevention and intervention are discussed from a gender role strain and an adult attachment perspective.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is recognized as a serious public health concern in the United States (Hage, 2000). The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines IPV as any instance of physical violence, sexual violence, or emotional abuse between intimate partners (e.g., current or former spouses, dating partners, boyfriends, or girlfriends) (Whitaker & Lutzker, 2009). The CDC also regards threatening to use physical or sexual violence as a form of IPV.

Although IPV was originally conceived as men's violence toward women (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), comprehensive reviews suggest that partner violence is reciprocal between male and female intimates (Archer, 2000) but with different motivations for men and women (Gormley, 2005; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). The consequences of men's violence toward women also tend to be more severe than women's violence toward men (O'Leary, 2000). For instance, IPV lead to the death of 1,177 women in 2005 and an estimated annual cost to the economy (e.g., medical bills and missed time at work) ranging from 5.8 to 8.3 billion dollars (Centers for Disease Control, 2010). Moreover, the psychological and physiological impacts of IPV are equally devastating for women (Campbell, Baty, Laughon, & Woods, 2009). Not surprisingly, women tend to report incidences of IPV at a much higher rate compared to men. According to the Bureau of Justice (2009), 552,000 women age 12 and older reported some kind of nonfatal violent victimization (e.g., rape/sexual assault, aggravated assault, or simple assault) from a spouse or dating partner in 2008. Comparatively, men age 12 and older reported 101,000 incidents of IPV in 2008.

Given the human and economic costs, predicting and understanding men's IPV toward women is an important area of psychological inquiry, and researchers have made significant advancements toward this goal. In the past 30 years, certain theoretical conceptualizations of IPV offenders have provided frameworks for understanding why some men commit partner violence. Contemporary expansions of early Feminist theories suggest that men's IPV is related to traditional masculine gender roles and the psychological distress resulting from rigid adherence to such roles (i.e., gender role strain; Pleck, 1981, 1995). At the same time, a wide body of literature has examined attachment theory in relation to IPV in men, suggesting that insecure attachment is more prominent in partner abusive men than non-abusive men (Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, & Yerington, 2000; Dutton, 1998, 2007; Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, & Hutchinson, 1997).

In addition to theoretical conceptualizations of IPV, investigators have uncovered a number of important risk factors in men such as a history of violence or emotional abuse, anger management problems, substance abuse, using power and control tactics, exposure to violence as a child, mental health issues, age, and attitudes accepting of IPV (see Stith & McMonigle, 2009 for a review). Although many of these risk factors have been explored in great detail, burgeoning research has provided intriguing results pertaining to age and attitudes condoning IPV. Younger, non-married individuals have reported much higher rates of IPV than expected (Lewis & Fremouw, 2000). In a comprehensive review, for example, Murraray and Kardatzke (2007) concluded that physical and sexual violence on college campuses ranges from as low as 17% to as high as 48%. Recent reviews have also indicated that college students report a higher

prevalence of IPV in dating relationships than married couples and adolescent dating partners, indicating that college students may be an at-risk population for violence in dating relationships (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007). Concurrently, college-student and adolescent IPV acceptance attitudes (e.g. beliefs condoning hitting, or threatening to hit, an intimate partner) have been positively correlated with measures of IPV frequency and subsequent relationship violence (Fincham, Cui, Braithwaite, & Pasley, 2008; Lichter & McCloskey, 2004; Riggs & O'Leary, 1996; Slep, Cascardi, Avery-Leaf, & O'Leary, 2001).

College students may be an ideal population for studying IPV and IPV acceptance, as many are involved, or have been involved, in dating and forming intimate connections (Gover, Kaukinen, & Fox, 2008). As such, college student dating violence has also become an important target for primary prevention of violence toward women (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Hage, 2000; Schwartz, Griffin, Russell, & Frontaurau-Duck, 2006; Schwartz, Magee, Griffin, & Dupuis, 2004). Because primary prevention aims to prevent IPV before it has developed, several prevention programs have included efforts to change attitudes related to IPV (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007). Compared to the vast literature concerning IPV frequency and severity, however, little is known about the etiology of IPV attitudes in college samples, especially in male populations. More importantly, investigators have yet to adequately examine the connections between adult attachment and masculine gender role strain theories, which have been previously connected to IPV perpetration, to IPV acceptance attitudes.

The present study extends previous research by examining the combined contributions of adult attachment dimensions (e.g., anxiety and avoidance) and gender

role strain toward the prediction of IPV acceptance attitudes in a college sample of men. More specifically, the present investigation examined whether (a) dimensions of adult attachment and gender role strain are related to men's acceptance of verbal, physical, and sexual IPV, and (b) if gender role strain mediates the relationship between attachment dimensions and IPV acceptance.

Toward these goals, the present dissertation consists of four chapters. Chapter II provides a theoretical overview and a description of key constructs pertaining to IPV acceptance attitudes, gender role strain, adult attachment, and how these constructs relate to IPV perpetration. Chapter II also provides a summary of where more research is needed in order to better understand IPV acceptance attitudes and presents an overarching theoretical argument connecting adult attachment and gender role strain to attitudes condoning partner violence. Next, Chapter III provides an in-depth literature review of the direct and indirect evidence connecting adult attachment and gender role strain to each other and to IPV attitudes. In addition, Chapter III presents a testable structural regression model illustrating the direct and indirect connections between adult attachment dimensions, masculine gender role strain, and IPV attitudes. This chapter also provides a detailed summary of gaps in the literature, key findings, and a list of research questions addressed in this study. Then, Chapters IV and V present a detailed explanation of the methods, analyses, and results of the present study. Finally, Chapter VI provides an in-depth discussion of the present findings, limitations of the study, and potential clinical implications.

## Chapter II

### Conceptual Overview

Understanding college men's IPV acceptance attitudes may be crucial to early intervention and prevention, yet little is known about what social and relational factors predict IPV attitudes. The present chapter (a) describes the history and measurement of IPV attitudes, (b) provides an overview of research connecting IPV attitudes to IPV perpetration, (c) identifies areas where more research is needed in order to better understand IPV attitudes, (d) details key constructs pertaining to established theories of men's IPV toward women, and (e) explains how gender role strain and adult attachment may be related to IPV attitudes.

### IPV Attitudes

**History and definition.** Since Makepeace (1981) provided one of the first comprehensive studies of IPV in college student populations, a number of self-report measures have been used to determine the frequency and severity of violence in dating relationships. These instruments, such as the *Conflict Tactics Scales* (CTS; Straus, 1979; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), which were originally designed to assess marital conflict, measure the number of times a person has been aggressive toward a partner in a given period of time. Primary prevention, however, requires that investigators assess and monitor IPV before it has occurred. Thus, researchers have attempted to address this discrepancy by examining IPV-related attitudes.

In the last 30 years, investigations of IPV attitudes have produced clear evidence that certain beliefs increase the likelihood of physical, sexual, and verbal abuse in relationships (Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004). Using ad-hoc assessments, early



studies indicated that acceptance and justification of IPV (e.g., the belief that IPV is acceptable in certain circumstances) was prevalent on college campuses and that acceptance of IPV predicted IPV perpetration in intimate relationships (Deal & Wampler, 1986; Dibble & Straus, 1980). Subsequent investigations using validated measures produced similar results. Scores on the *Attitudes about Aggression in Dating Situations scale* (AADS; Slep, Cascardi, Avery-Leaf, & O'Leary, 2001), the *Justification of Verbal/Coercive Tactics scale* (JVCT, Slep et al., 2001), the *Attitudes Toward Male Dating Violence Scale* (AMDV; Price & Byers, 1999), and the *Intimate Partner Violence Attitudes Scale-Revised* (IPVAS-R; Fincham, Cui, Braithwaite, & Pasley, 2008), which measure respondents' beliefs condoning various forms of aggression in intimate relationships, have been positively correlated with IPV frequency (Fincham et al., 2008; Price & Beyers, 1999; Slep et al., 2001). Attitudes supporting violence in relationships have also been connected to IPV severity (Stith & Farley, 1993), and in a community sample of offending and non-offending men, acceptance of IPV was related to IPV frequency, with non-offending men reporting significantly fewer of these beliefs than offending men (Hanson, Cadsky, Harris, & Lalonde, 1997). Similar results have been found with college men's acceptance of sexual IPV. In a recent longitudinal study, men who became sexually abusive over time reported more acceptance of sexual IPV compared to men who did not commit sexual assault (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004).

Taken together, studies of IPV attitudes offer compelling evidence to connect IPV supportive beliefs to the perpetration of physical and psychological abuse in relationships. As such, changing the degree of acceptance and justification of violence has been a central component of many IPV prevention programs (e.g., Foshee et al.,

2005), and measures of IPV attitudes are often used to assess program efficacy (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007). Additionally, researchers have suggested that IPV attitudes may be especially appropriate for primary prevention efforts, as interventions designed to change IPV attitudes may be applied universally, whereas specific behavioral approaches may only be applicable for individuals already involved in intimate relationships or intimate partner conflict (Slep et al., 2001).

Despite their potential benefits and wide use in the field, research has yet to thoroughly explore the predictors of attitudes condoning physical, psychological, or sexual violence, (Nabors, Dietz, & Jasinski, 2006). Specifically, several studies have examined the connections between IPV attitudes and IPV perpetration, yet researchers have not adequately examined IPV attitudes in relation to established theories of IPV etiology, such as gender role strain theory (Pleck, 1981, 1995) and adult attachment theory (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). As a result, it is unclear how masculine role socialization and men's views of self and others in relationships contribute to harmful IPV attitudes.

### **Established Theories of Men's IPV Perpetration**

**Men's gender role socialization.** For decades, scholars have argued that men's IPV toward women is, in part, a product of behaviors rooted in patriarchal masculine role socialization and male privilege (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gondolf & Russell, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993). In the past 30 years, research into the psychology of men and masculinity has provided important insights about the consequences of men's socialization leading to maladaptive interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes (Levant & Pollack, 1995; O'Neil, 2008; Smiler, 2004).

Originally born from the feminist deconstructions of male and female gender roles, the psychology of men is distinct from earlier forms of gender role inquiry. For instance, Pleck (1995) argued that research and theory regarding gender roles can be divided into three categories: a gender role identity paradigm, a normative gender role paradigm, and a gender role strain paradigm. The older, gender role identity paradigm consists of measuring internalized personality traits representing socially constructed characteristics of masculinity and femininity. This approach is characterized by instruments, such as the *Bem Sex Role Inventory* (Bem, 1974) and the *Personality Attributes Questionnaire* (Spence & Helmreich, 1979), which measure the degree of self-reported endorsement of traits representing gendered ways of interacting with the world. Although researchers continue to use these scales to assess gender role beliefs, critiques of the BSRI and the PAQ indicate that neither scale is an accurate reflection of gender role socialization and, instead, tap personality characteristics considered masculine or feminine in western society (Good, Borst, & Wallace, 1994; Spence, 1991). The normative gender role approach, however, consists of assessing endorsement of socialized messages regarding appropriate beliefs and behaviors for men and women and has been hailed as a more specific way of examining gender role socialization (Levant & Pollack, 1995, McCreary, 1998; Moore & Stuart, 2005). This approach uses instruments designed to assess the degree of endorsement or conformity to socially constructed gender role norms such as the *Conformity to Masculine Role Norms Inventory* (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003) and the *Male Role Norms Inventory* (Levant, Smalley, Bryant, & Maryse, 2007). Lastly, the gender role strain paradigm asserts that rigid adherence to certain socialized gender role norms leads to psychological distress (Eisler & Skidmore,

1987; O'Neil, 2008; Pleck, 1981, 1995). The gender role strain paradigm measures distress resulting from rigid adherence to various dysfunctional gender role norms through instruments such as the *Gender Role Stress Scale* (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987) and the *Gender Role Conflict Scale* (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986).

Compared to the normative and gender role strain paradigms, the gender role identity paradigm may not be as relevant to understanding the consequences of men's socialization. In a comprehensive review of studies examining men's gender role socialization and IPV, Moore and Stuart (2005) concluded that measurements of masculinity from a gender role identity paradigm were not good predictors of partner violence; whereas, measures of gender role strain and adherence to masculine role norms were more consistent predictors of men's IPV. Additionally, instruments grounded in a gender role identity paradigm have been used to test the discriminant validity of normative and gender role strain paradigm constructs, further suggesting that a gender role identity paradigm is distinct from the normative and strain approaches (Levant & Richmond, 2007).

**Men's gender role strain.** The normative paradigm and the gender role strain paradigm are intrinsically connected. Pleck (1981) first outlined the gender role strain paradigm in a series of important observations related to gender role norms based on previous research and theory (See Pleck, 1995 for a review). He argued that (1) gender role norms are contradictory and inconsistent, (2) the proportion of people violating role norms is high, (3) violation of role norms leads to negative intrapersonal and interpersonal consequences, (4) violation of role norms is often more damaging for men than for women, and (5) certain role norms are dysfunctional when completely fulfilled

or rigidly followed. Because empirical investigations have offered additional support for these five observations, particularly that men are more constrained by certain gender roles more than women, and that certain gender roles are dysfunctional (Pleck, 1995), the gender role strain paradigm has provided a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the consequences of men's gender role socialization.

Pleck (1981, 1995) argued that masculine role socialization has an adverse impact on men and is evident in three related areas of gender role strain: trauma strain, discrepancy strain, and dysfunction strain. Whereas trauma strain refers to the early experiences of men's gender role socialization, such as peer hazing and enforcement of masculine role norms which may leave psychological scars, discrepancy and dysfunction strain describe the consequences of endorsing various gender role norms. Discrepancy strain refers to the psychological distress resulting from an inability to meet societal standards of masculinity (i.e., not being able to fulfill certain role norms or violating important role norms). A popular measure of discrepancy strain, the *Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale* (MGRS; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987), measures the amount of subjective distress resulting from situations violating male role norms. Masculine gender role stress is measured in five interrelated domains: physical inadequacy, emotional inexpressiveness, subordination to women, intellectual inferiority, and performance failures. Dysfunction strain, on the other hand, suggests that certain gender role norms are damaging when rigidly followed or completely fulfilled. The *Gender Role Conflict Scale* (GRCS; O'Neil et al., 1986) is a popular measure of men's dysfunction strain, as it suggests that psychological distress results from adherence to underlying cognitive, affective, and behavioral role norms for men that are grounded in sexist ideology and a

fear of femininity (O'Neil, 2008). Gender role conflict is measured in four interrelated domains: success power and competition, restrictive emotionality, restrictive affectionate behavior between men, and conflict between work and family. Although gender role conflict and gender role stress have been identified as somewhat independent consequences of masculine role socialization (Walker, Tokar, & Fischer, 2000), they both share a conceptual underpinning of rigid adherence to problematic masculine role norms, and they both represent a general tendency to experience role norms as restrictive and maladaptive (Fischer, 2007).

In an important update to the gender role strain paradigm, Pleck (1995) expanded his theory to be more inclusive of a normative approach and to further elucidate the etiology of dysfunction and discrepancy strain. Pleck asserted that masculinity ideologies (i.e., constellations of role norms dictating appropriate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors for men and women) are linked to gender role strain. Further research and theory indicates that men are socialized to adhere to traditional gender role ideologies (i.e., beliefs consisting of hegemonic, patriarchal male role norms reflecting attitudes prevalent before the feminist deconstruction of gender roles; Levant, 1996). Indeed, though gendered perceptions of men and women are changing, traditional messages of masculinity are still highly prevalent in society (Gentry & Harrison, 2010) and likely influence, in part, men's gender role self-concepts (Pleck, 1995).

Investigators continue to discover additional components of traditional masculinity ideologies (e.g., Mahalik et al., 2003), but, in general, adherence to traditional role norms regarding men's strength, stoicism, dominance over women, competitiveness, and homonegativity (e.g., anti-gay attitudes) are commonly associated

with traditional approaches to masculinity (Levant, 1996; Mahalik et al., 2003; O'Neil, 2008). Additionally, Pleck (1995) suggested that traditional masculinity ideologies amplify discrepancy strain and dysfunction strain, as traditional masculine ideals are difficult to achieve (discrepancy strain) and are maladaptive when fully fulfilled (dysfunction strain). In support, several studies have reported moderate to strong positive correlations between adherence to traditional masculine role norms and gender role conflict (Berger, Levant, McMillan, Kelleher, & Sellers, 2005; Levant et al., 2010; O'Neil, 2008) as well as moderate to strong correlations between traditional male role norms and gender role stress (Cohn & Zeichner, 2006; Jakupack, 2002; Parrot, Peterson, Vincent, & Bakerman, 2008). Concurrently, as will be discussed in Chapter II, traditional gender role ideologies and subsequent gender role strain have been positively correlated to a number of damaging attitudes, including those linked to general violence tendencies and violence against women (see Levant & Richmond, 2007; O'Neil, 2008 for detailed reviews).

### **Conceptual Connections between Gender Role Strain and IPV**

Aspects of traditional masculine role norms have been clearly described in established theories of IPV (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gondolf & Russell, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993). The Deluth Model, which has influenced a variety of IPV treatment and intervention programs for men, suggests that men are socialized to believe violence is an acceptable means of maintaining power and control in relationships (Pence & Paymer, 1993). Power and control have been identified as important motivators for IPV toward women in some men, particularly men who repeatedly abuse and denigrate their partners, but this type of violence is not as prevalent as common couple IPV

(Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). In addition to focusing solely men's need for power and patriarchal dominance, the gender role strain paradigm expanded previous theories of IPV by emphasizing the restricted experiences of men who rigidly adhere to traditional masculinity ideologies. Specifically, men's acceptance of certain traditional beliefs about the male role, and the resulting dysfunction strain and discrepancy strain offer a unique perspective of men's violence toward women.

Theoretical explanations of men's IPV and gender role strain have focused on the perpetration of physical and verbal violence resulting from violations of traditional role norms. From this perspective, negative affect from perceived violations of traditional masculinity ideology may be transformed into violence and aggression (Eisler, Franchina, & Moore, 2001; Moore et al., 2008). Relatedly, researchers have theorized that gender role strain from rigid adherence to traditional masculinity ideology may leave men with inadequate defenses with which to handle interpersonal conflict, thus increasing the chances of using IPV in conflicts (O'Neil & Nadeau, 1999).

The inability to regulate negative affect and the development of immature psychological defenses is believed to be a consequence of dysfunctional beliefs regarding men's stoicism, emotional restriction, dominance and power, and male to male friendships (O'Neil & Nadeau, 1999). Levant (1996) argued that men are socialized to restrict their vulnerable emotions, such as sadness or shame, leading to difficulty expressing and dealing with negative emotional states. Levant (1992, 1998) posited that many traditional men have avoided vulnerable emotions to the point where they may lack the ability to verbalize and cope with their distress, and Long (1987) suggested that men are taught to transform vulnerable emotions into anger, which is a more "appropriate"



form of male emotional expression. When men experience discrepancy strain in a relationship, therefore, they may be more likely to transform their distress into violent actions against their partners (Copenhaver, Lash, & Eisler, 2000; Eisler et al., 2001). Concurrently, rigid adherence to dysfunctional beliefs that men should not express vulnerable emotions, should be dominant, powerful and competitive, and should not be affectionate with other men, may lead to a “defensive masculinity” (O’Neil & Nadeau, 1999 p.100). The inability to appropriately express emotional distress in a relationship or to form important social support networks in order to adaptively deal with interpersonal conflict may further increase the likelihood of perpetrating violence and abuse (O’Neil & Harway, 1997).

**Adult attachment theory.** Similar to gender role strain theory, adult attachment theory (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) provides a theoretical framework for understanding men’s IPV (Gormley, 2005; Sonkin & Dutton, 2003). Rather than focusing on masculine gender role socialization, however, adult attachment theory describes how men and women develop their view of self and other in a relational context. Adult attachment constructs have been established as consistent predictors of individual differences in problematic relationship functioning (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007 for a review), including IPV (Dutton, 2007; Gormley, 2005), and adult attachment has been the subject of prevention and intervention efforts related to IPV (Lawson et al., 2001; Lawson, 2010; Sonkin & Dutton, 2003).

Adult attachment theory burgeoned from the earlier work of John Bowlby (1969/1982) and Mary Ainsworth (1973) on attachment in early caregiving relationships. Bowlby (1988) asserted that the attachment system is derived from a biological

imperative to maintain proximity to warm and supportive others (i.e., attachment figures) in times of real or perceived threat. When a threat is perceived, the attachment system activates, and when a sense of security is achieved by obtaining proximity to an attachment figure, the attachment system deactivates.

The attachment system was originally studied in infancy. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) extended Bowlby's research in order to operationalize and test attachment in infants through a Strange Situation observational methodology. Ainsworth et al. (1978) demonstrated that that infants exhibited distinct styles in their proximity seeking behaviors after being separated from their mothers and when their mothers returned. Differences in proximity seeking were later identified as attachment styles in infants and have been generalized to adults (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007 for a review). With the discovery of attachment styles, Ainsworth expanded on Bowlby's original positions and, conjointly, their research formed the central tenets of attachment theory.

A key assumption of attachment theory is that the attachment system is goal-corrective (Bowlby, 1969/1982). In other words, a person cognitively monitors his or her ability to meet the goal of attachment security and, based on past experiences, forms cognitive schemas about self and other (i.e., working models; Bowlby, 1973, 1980; Bretherton, 1985; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). In their comprehensive review of attachment theory and research, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) described working models of self and other as cognitive schemas representing internalized repeated interactional patterns with attachment figures. For instance, a person develops a schema of other based on previous interactions with attachment figures. If the attachment figure is warm, responsive, and caring, repeated interactions may lead to a positive working model of

other. However, if the attachment figure is perceived as not being available, cold, and unloving, repeated interactions may generalize to a negative working model of others.

At the same time, the goal-corrective nature of the attachment system indicates that individuals appraise their actions in terms of their ability to meet the goals of the system (e.g., proximity to close and supporting others). Repeated interactions with caring attachment figures likely lead to positive views of self, as individuals establish a sense of self-efficacy and self-worth about their ability to seek out comfort in times of distress and their worthiness for love and respect. Likewise, continual inability to attain close proximity with others in times of distress lead to negative views of one's self-efficacy and self-worth. These working models of self and other, formed by earlier interactions, provide a blueprint for how individuals see themselves and others in a relational context. As such, attachment theory provides a useful framework for understanding men and women's, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in relationships, and it has been extended from studies of infants and children to understanding adult relationship dynamics (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) suggested that attachment in adult relationships is similar to and influenced by attachment at an early age, as each person's attachment style reflects the history of previous relationships, including parental attachment bonds, and the process of forming adult intimate relationships further influences working models of self and other. Based on Bowlby and Ainsworth's work, Hazan and Shaver (1987) identified three adult attachment styles capable of predicting individual relationship dynamics: secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent. Secure individuals identified with statements of being able to be close and depend on romantic partners while not being

overly concerned with abandonment. Avoidant individuals identified with statements of feeling discomfort with intimacy and trust in relationships. Lastly, anxious/ambivalent individuals identified with statements of feeling like their partners were often not as close as they would like, and that they worried about being abandoned. In a later study, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) expanded adult attachment research by identifying four distinct attachment orientations based on views of self and others: secure (positive self and positive other views), preoccupied (positive other but negative view of self), dismissing-avoidant (positive view of self and negative view of other), and fearful-avoidant (negative view of self and other).

Over time, investigators extended Hazan and Shaver's (1987) and Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) research, and a variety of self-report measures of adult attachment have been developed. In a groundbreaking study, however, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) identified that adult attachment styles are best represented by two overarching dimensions: attachment avoidance, and attachment anxiety. Attachment avoidance pertains to discomfort of intimacy, difficulty being vulnerable in relationships, distrust of other people, and a desire to be self-reliant, whereas attachment anxiety pertains to a strong desire for closeness and intimacy combined with fears of abandonment and doubts related to self-worth. A secure attachment, therefore, is represented by less attachment anxiety and avoidance. Taxonomic measures of adult attachment are still widely used in the field, but it has been argued that continuous measures of adult attachment dimensions—particularly the *Experiences in Close Relationships Scale* (Brennan et al., 1998) which measures attachment anxiety and

attachment avoidance separately—provide a more in-depth explanation of attachment dynamics (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Taking into account adult attachment dimensions, as well as previous attachment research (e.g., Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Main, 1985), Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) have suggested that attachment styles in adults are related to chronic patterns of proximity seeking in times of real or perceived relationship threat or distress. Mikulincer and Shaver's model suggests that the adult attachment system activates when a threat is perceived. If proximity seeking is a considered to be a viable option, which largely depends on previous romantic and parental attachments, then a sense of security is established, and the attachment system deactivates. In contrast, if the intimate partner is not perceived as being warm, attentive, and responsive, then attachment insecurity occurs.

During experiences of real or perceived threats, the goal of the attachment system is to reduce the distress further compounded by attachment insecurity. A person with an anxious (i.e., preoccupied) attachment orientation, at this point, will be more likely to use hyperactivating strategies in order to cling to the partner and relieve attachment insecurity. A consequence of this is that attachment anxiety is reinforced and, over time, individuals become hypervigilant regarding relationship threats and attachment-related cues (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Consequently, anxiously attached individuals tend to use hyperactivating emotional regulation strategies, such that they escalate and enhance negative affect in order to draw attachment figures closer (Lopez & Brennan, 2000; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003; Wei, Vogle, Ku, & Zakalik, 2005).

A person with a dismissingly avoidant attachment style, on the other hand, tends to use deactivating strategies in order to reduce distress resulting from attachment insecurity (Lopez & Brennan, 2000; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2003; Wei, Vogle, Ku, & Zakalik, 2005). As a result, when stressed, dismissingly avoidant individuals tend to distance themselves from attachment figures, and their avoidance of intimacy and fear of vulnerability is further reinforced. Like dismissingly avoidant individuals, fearfully avoidant individuals may use deactivating strategies in order to deal with relationship distress; however, they may also use hyperactivating strategies. More importantly, research suggests that fearfully avoidant individuals use affect regulation strategies haphazardly and in a disorganized fashion, as they simultaneously want to distance themselves from relationships, yet they still yearn for love and affection (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Such disorganized approaches to relationship functioning can have severe consequences (Dutton, 2007).

Affect regulation strategies may be crucial for understanding interpersonal problems stemming from attachment insecurity. Indeed, Wei et al. (2005) found that the relationship between attachment avoidance and interpersonal problems was mediated by hyperactivating affect regulation strategies. Concurrently, the relationship between attachment avoidance and interpersonal problems was mediated through emotional cutoff strategies. Wei et al.'s findings suggest that attempts to reduce attachment insecurity using maladaptive affect regulation strategies are related to problematic relationship behaviors, and they provide further support that fears of abandonment and discomfort with intimacy are related to specific ways of managing affect.

**Theoretical connections between IPV and attachment.** Efforts to resolve attachment insecurity and an inability to regulate negative affect are believed to be crucial components of IPV, especially for men (Dutton, 2007; Sonkin & Dutton 2003). Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) posited that securely attached individuals have three important emotional regulatory advantages compared to insecurely attached individuals which may prevent dangerous relationship conflict. Specifically, securely attached individuals are able to (1) express their emotions openly without fear of reprisal, (2) seek intimacy and proximity in order to deal with perceived threats to attachment, and (3) use more adaptive forms of coping in order to deal with distress. The ability to use effective coping strategies, in turn, leads to less reliance on psychological defenses that can distort reality and lead to more relationship conflict.

Others have also suggested that anxiously attached and avoidantly attached men may commit IPV as a consequence of their respective attachment-related concerns (eg., Dutton 1998, 2007, Gormley, 2005; Sonkin & Dutton, 2003). Anxiously attached men may become extremely frustrated and angry when they perceive their partners pulling away. This may lead to impulsive or violent behavior stemming from anxious attempts to control the relationship (Dutton, 2007; Gormley, 2005). Avoidantly attached men, on the other hand, may be more likely to view a partner's perceived bids for intimacy as threatening, and violence may be a powerful way of controlling the amount of emotional closeness and distance in the relationship (Gormley, 2005). Dutton (1998, 2007) posited that men with high levels of both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (e.g., fearfully avoidant individuals) are especially predisposed for IPV, as they may have been

abused as children, and they may have also developed borderline personality characteristics which make it difficult to manage attachment insecurity.

### **Connecting Established Theories of IPV to IPV Attitudes**

Adult attachment theory and gender role strain theory provide predictions related to men's thoughts, feelings, and actions, particularly as they relate to IPV perpetration. This may be salient to understanding men's IPV attitudes, as social science research has discovered that attitudes contain behavioral, cognitive, and affective components (Breckler, 1984; Crites, Fabrigar, & Petty, 1994; Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1994). More importantly, investigators have suggested that attitudes are created and reinforced through cognitive, behavioral, and affective experiences (Breckler, & Wiggins, 1989; Zanna & Rempel, 1988). Therefore, attitudes condoning IPV in relationships may be related to variables that influence cognitions, affect regulation strategies, and behaviors.

**Cognitive components of IPV attitudes.** Prior research and theory indicates that some beliefs are the result of cognitions pertaining to the utility of the attitude (Katz, 1960). For traditional men, acceptance of IPV may be useful in maintaining and justifying patriarchal world views. Gender role strain theory suggests that if men see themselves in rigid and traditional ways, they are likely to adhere to certain masculine role ideology increasing the chances of interpersonal and intrapersonal problems. Traditional masculine role ideology is rooted in patriarchal, sexist cognitions about men and women's roles in society (Levant, 1996), and one aspect of this ideology may be the belief that violence is a way of maintaining power and control over women (Pence & Paymer, 1993). Men's gender role strain resulting from rigid adherence to traditional role norms, therefore, may predict IPV acceptance attitudes, as IPV acceptance may have a



utilitarian value for traditional men in maintaining their sense of dominance in a relationship.

Similar to gender role strain theory, adult attachment theory provides a framework for understanding the cognitive components of men's IPV attitudes. Adult attachment theory suggests that insecurely attached men develop negative views of self and other that lead to cognitive distortions influencing their perceptions of relationships. For instance, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) argued that attachment dimensions, which impact a person's perceptions of relationship threat and a partner's warmth and responsiveness, tend to reciprocally reinforce habits of proximity seeking and managing relationship conflict. Avoidantly attached and anxiously attached men may view relationships as threatening, as they have been connected to perceived bids for intimacy and the possibility of abandonment, respectively. Given that IPV is likely a result of efforts to manage these threats (Gormley, 2005), attitudes condoning IPV may be related to attachment dimensions in that attachment and IPV attitudes both tap maladaptive beliefs about relationships.

**Behavioral component of IPV attitudes.** Like cognitions, behaviors play a large role in the development and maintenance of attitudes. Specifically, behaviors reinforce and inform attitudes (Bem, 1972). Because IPV attitudes are related to IPV perpetration, male perpetrators of IPV may justify their behaviors through pro-IPV attitudes. Relatedly, some anxiously attached men who commit IPV due to blinding rage born from attachment frustration (Dutton, 1998) may later form attitudes of IPV based on their actions. Both gender role strain theory and adult attachment theory provide frameworks for understanding and predicting men's behaviors in relationships. Furthermore, both

predict men's IPV. Given this connection, attachment dimensions and gender role strain may also predict men's IPV attitudes.

**Affective component of IPV attitudes.** The last component of attitudes, affect, may be particularly relevant to IPV acceptance. Attitudes that are affect-laden are often difficult to change, irrational, and highly volatile, as they reflect core values and beliefs (Katz, 1960). Feminist theorists have argued that IPV may be a product of traditional values regarding men's dominance over women (Dobash & Dobash, 1976; Pence & Paymer, 1993). Given that IPV attitudes are irrational and dangerous, and because they may reflect patriarchal world views, IPV acceptance attitudes may be affectively driven. IPV attitudes, therefore, may reflect core values in traditional men.

Another way affect may impact IPV acceptance attitudes is through operant conditioning. Researchers have suggested that individuals may form affectively-based attitudes through experiences which reinforce the valence of the attitude (Cacioppo, Marshall-Goodell, Tassinari, & Petty, 1992). According to adult attachment and gender role strain theory, men's IPV may be a result of an inability to manage negative affect created by adult attachment insecurity, violation of traditional roles, or adherence to dysfunctional role norms. In either case, IPV may be a result of trying to regain control and deal with distress (Gormley, 2005). Therefore, IPV attitudes may be related to variables which may influence or predict the way men respond to negative emotional experiences. Because both gender role strain theory and adult attachment theory emphasize the inability to effectively manage negative affect, both theoretical frameworks may be especially relevant to IPV acceptance attitudes.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The preceding overview of IPV attitudes, gender role strain theory, and adult attachment theory indicates that (1) IPV attitudes have been linked to IPV perpetration, (2) IPV attitudes may be useful for prevention and intervention, (3) IPV attitudes have not yet been adequately explored in relation to established theories of IPV, (4) established theories of IPV, such as gender role strain theory and adult attachment theory, provide a theoretical framework for understanding men's IPV perpetration, and (5) adult attachment theory and gender role strain theory allow researchers to make specific predictions regarding men's cognitions, affect regulation, and behaviors.

Given that attitudes contain and are maintained through cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes, a strong theoretical argument can be used to link gender role strain and adult attachment constructs to IPV attitudes. It is unclear, however, whether adult attachment dimensions and gender role strain work together to predict IPV attitudes, because no previous studies have examined these constructs concurrently. In order to further explicate these possible connections, Chapter II expands on the arguments provided in Chapter 1 by examining the indirect empirical connections between adult attachment, gender role strain, and IPV acceptance attitudes.

### **Chapter III:**

#### **Literature Review**

As Chapter I demonstrated, adult attachment dimensions and gender role strain are conceptually connected to men's IPV and IPV acceptance attitudes. As will be discussed in more detail in the sections to follow, prior research has yet to adequately test the combined contributions of adult attachment and gender role strain in the prediction of IPV attitudes. The current study represented the first investigation examining these constructs concurrently and, in an effort to address gaps in the literature, sought to examine how adult attachment and gender role strain may work together to predict attitudes condoning physical, psychological, and sexual violence. Chapter II provides (a) an overview of direct and indirect empirical connections between adult attachment and IPV acceptance attitudes, (b) an analysis of research linking gender role strain to IPV acceptance attitudes, (c) a discussion of studies connecting attachment to gender role strain, and (d) a list of gaps in the literature and research questions to be addressed in the present study. The remainder of Chapter II presents a model illustrating the direct and indirect contributions of adult attachment and gender role strain to IPV acceptance attitudes. This section will conclude with a list of hypotheses addressed in the current study.

#### **Empirical Connections**

**Attachment and IPV acceptance.** To date, only one published study has directly explored the relationships between attachment and IPV acceptance attitudes. In a large sample of adolescent boys and girls, Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, and Haworth (2002) examined the interrelationships among IPV attitudes, attachment to peers,

attachment to romantic partners, emotional styles, and attitudes condoning IPV. They did not find a relationship between attachment and IPV attitudes; however, two important methodological limitations may explain their findings. First, the authors used an unpublished measure of IPV attitudes which has not been used in subsequent research. Second, the sample size of boys was relatively small, and the authors did not report controlling for age or social desirability effects. Given the wide range of ages sampled (9<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade), and the highly face-valid questions about perpetrating and accepting IPV, controlling for age and socially desirable responding may have produced a different pattern of results.

More research is clearly needed in order to understand the possible connections between adult attachment and IPV attitudes in college age men. Still, indirect evidence suggests that these constructs should be related, as IPV attitudes are associated with IPV perpetration (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Fincham et al., 2008; Price & Beyers, 1999; Slep et al., 2001), and adult attachment has also been a consistent predictor of IPV (Gormley, 2005). Specifically, adult attachment insecurity has been associated with men's psychological abuse (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994; Gormley & Lopez, 2010a, Gormley & Lopez, 2010b; Murphy & Hoover, 1999), physical abuse (Dumas, Pearson, Elgin, & McKinley, 2008; Dutton et al., 1994; Lawson, 2008; Mauricio & Lopez, 2009; Roberts & Noller, 1998), and sexual abuse (Abbey, Parkhill, Clinton-Sherrod, & Zawacki, 2007; Smallbone & Dadds, 2001).

Prior research also indicates that attachment anxiety and avoidance dimensions may be differentially related to specific forms of IPV. In particular, Dutton et al. (1994) reported a robust association between attachment anxiety and physical abuse, as well as a

clear association between psychological abuse and fearful attachment. Other studies have also indicated that attachment anxiety may have a stronger relationship with physical abuse than attachment avoidance (Roberts & Noller, 1998). Gormley and Lopez (2010a) further reported positive correlations between men's dominance and attachment avoidance but not attachment anxiety; yet, the opposite patterns of results were found when men were assessed on a measure of hostile withdrawal behaviors (Gormley & Lopez, 2010b). Likewise, Smallbone and Dadds (2001) reported a weak relationship between men's attachment anxiety and coercive sexual behaviors, while men's attachment avoidance exhibited a much stronger relationship. In the same study, only attachment avoidance was significantly correlated with self-reported aggression. Such inconsistent findings suggest (a) the presence of one or more mediating or moderating variables, (b) that researchers should continue to examine adult attachment dimensions in relation to specific forms of IPV, and (c) that adult attachment dimensions may also be differentially related to acceptance of specific forms of IPV.

**Gender role strain and IPV Acceptance.** Initial investigations have suggested that masculine role socialization, or aspects central to a traditional male role, may be related to men's acceptance of IPV. College men tend to report greater acceptance of IPV than college women (Finn, 1986; Locke & Richman, 1999; Merten & Williams, 2009), indicating that men may be likely to condone IPV. Such gender discrepancies regarding IPV attitudes are consistent with extant theories of men's violence toward women, which assert that men are socialized to believe that violence is an appropriate way to maintain power in a relationship (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gondolf & Russell, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Early investigations have provided initial evidence linking traditional gender role ideologies to IPV attitudes (e.g., Burt, 1980; Finn, 1986). In a more recent study of high school students, Lichter and McCloskey (2004) found moderate, positive correlations between traditional gender roles ideologies and attitudes justifying dating violence. Likewise, traditional views of women's roles have been connected to acceptance of physical, sexual, and psychological dating violence in high school aged boys (Price & Byers, 1999). Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe (2001) also found strong to moderate correlations between traditional gender role ideologies and acceptance of IPV, and, in a different study, sex role egalitarian beliefs were consistent negative predictors of attitudes supporting IPV (Berkel, Vandiver, & Bahner, 2004).

Although modest in number, previous research has shown that traditional masculine gender roles are related to IPV acceptance. Given the connections between traditional masculine role norms and gender role strain, it is also likely that IPV acceptance is related to gender role strain constructs, and, indeed, previous investigations have found positive correlations between gender role conflict and attitudes accepting of sexual violence toward women (Hill & Fischer, 2001; Rando, Rogers, Brittan-Powell, 1998). Still, Reitzel-Jaffee and Wolfe (2001) and Berkel et al. (2004) remain the only contemporary investigations of gender role ideology and physical and verbal IPV acceptance attitudes using college men.

Furthermore, many studies examining gender role ideology and IPV attitudes have employed outdated assessments based on theoretical perspectives that are not relevant to the gender role strain paradigm and may not be related to men's violence against women (Moore & Stuart, 2005). Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe (2001) used the Bem

Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) to assess men's endorsement of traditional gender roles. The BSRI has been criticized for its inability to adequately measure traditional gender roles (Good, Borst, & Wallace, 1994; Spence, 1991), and studies using the BSRI and related instruments have produced, at best, mixed findings regarding men's IPV (Moore & Stuart, 2005). Given the methodological limitations of previous research and provided the dearth of literature pertaining to IPV attitudes and gender role strain, more research is needed in this area in order to make substantive conclusions about the connections between men's gender role strain and IPV acceptance attitudes.

Compared to the number of investigations examining men's gender role strain and IPV perpetration, the aforementioned assessment-related strategies employed in studies of IPV attitudes represent an important gap in the literature. Additionally, given that little direct evidence exists to connect gender role strain to IPV acceptance, particularly for verbal and physical forms of IPV, the interrelations between these constructs is not documented. Previous studies of men's gender role stress, however, provide initial support for the existence of these relationships. Men's gender role stress, for instance, has been linked to physical and emotional IPV perpetration in community and clinical samples of men (Copenhaver, Lash, & Eisler, 2000; Moore et al., 2008). Furthermore, controlled experiments have demonstrated that college men with high levels of gender role stress, when compared to men with low levels of gender role stress, are more likely to be angry and endorse using physical and emotional partner-abusive behaviors in response to intimate partner conflict vignettes (Eisler, Franchina, Moore, Honeycutt, & Rhatigan, 2000). In a related study, men with high gender role stress scores were also more likely to endorse verbal aggression when forced to violate traditional role norms in



gender role relevant situations compared to men with low gender role stress and gender irrelevant situations (Franchina, Eisler, & Moore, 2001). Provided that IPV perpetration and acceptance are related, these findings provide indirect evidence to suggest a relationship between the psychological distress stemming from masculine role socialization and IPV acceptance attitudes.

**Attachment and gender role strain.** Previous research and theory suggests that parental attachment and gender role socialization may be connected, and that boys' attachments to their mothers or fathers may lead to the creation of problematic gender self-schemas and maladaptive attitudes. Pollack (1995) suggested that insecurely attached men have been socialized to prematurely separate from their mothers and fathers, thus setting the stage for problems in latter relationships and increasing the chances that men will adhere to traditional masculine role norms in problematic ways. DeFranc and Mahalik (2002) expanded on Pollack's original positions and argued that adult attachment styles, particularly anxious/ambivalent and avoidant, are a result of the contradictory and traumatizing messages parents tell young boys emphasizing independence, self-reliance, and the avoidance of intimacy and vulnerability (e.g., "boys' don't cry", or, "take it like a man!"). Later, Pollack (2004) argued that boys' premature separation from their parents may form cognitive models of self and other representative of an anxious attachment style, as the inability to manage feelings of dependence and fears of abandonment may be solidified by pressures to separate at an early age.

Prior research has supported Pollack's (1995, 2004) and DeFranc and Mahalik's (2002) hypotheses, as gender role conflict has been positively correlated with self-reported problems of separation and individuation in college men (Blazina & Watkins,

2000), and men with less gender role conflict and less gender role stress have reported closer attachments to their parents (DeFranc & Mahalik, 2002; Fischer & Good, 1998). These researchers have argued that attachment and parental dynamics between sons and mothers may be especially important in understanding the ways in which gender role adherence results in problematic outcomes in adulthood. Blazina and Watkins (2000) provided support for this assertion and examined the relationship between parental attachment, gender role conflict, and attitudes toward women. In a moderate sample of college men, they concluded that insecure parental attachment may lead men to an overall discomfort and devaluation of the feminine later in life, thus increasing the chances of experiencing gender role conflict and endorsing negative attitudes toward women. More recently, Fischer (2007) identified that problems with early son-parent attachment bonds are related to certain personality characteristics (e.g., neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) which, in turn, are more proximal predictors of men's gender role strain. Fischer's study suggested that men who experience parental attachment difficulties may develop working models of self and other reflective of difficulties with emotional lability, social harmony, excessive drive for achievement, and traditional views and attitudes. More importantly, these pervasive personality issues may exacerbate the experience of masculine gender role strain.

Consistent with Hazan and Shaver's (1987) argument that adult attachment is influenced by parental attachment, studies of men's gender role strain and adult attachment in intimate relationships have produced similar results. In the first published article examining men's gender role conflict and adult attachment styles, Schwartz (2004)

discovered that male college students with a secure adult attachment style reported significantly less gender role conflict than did insecurely attached men.

Schwartz (2004) found that securely attached men reported less restrictive emotionality compared to men with either a fearful (high avoidance and anxiety), preoccupied (high anxiety low avoidance), or dismissing (high avoidance low anxiety) attachment style, suggesting that securely attached men are less restricted by beliefs that men should not express vulnerable emotions. This is also consistent with Mikulincer and Shaver's (2007) model, which indicates that securely attached individuals feel comfortable expressing emotions and are able to manage negative affect in a healthy fashion, and they correspond with earlier studies of parental attachment (e.g., Blazina & Watkins, 2001; Good & Fischer, 1998). Moreover, there were no differences in restrictive emotionality across the three insecure attachment styles, further indicating that the inability to express vulnerable emotions is a key component of attachment insecurity in college men. Schwartz also noted that fearfully attached men reported the most role conflict concerning issues of success, power, and competition, suggesting that experiencing high levels of both attachment anxiety and avoidance may be related to an unhealthy and rigid drive for fulfilling the male role of dominance and power.

Subsequent investigation has provided further insight into the connections between adult attachment and problematic masculine gender roles. In a sample of male IPV offenders, Mahalik, Aldarondo, Gilbert-Gokhale, and Shore (2005) found that self-reported attachment style was related to masculine gender role stress. Mahalik and colleagues reported a significant positive correlation between gender role stress and a continuous measure of fearful attachment. Interestingly, the relationship between gender

role stress and an anxious attachment style was not significant, signifying that gender role discrepancy strain in men who commit abuse is more closely aligned with problems in both dimensions of attachment rather than anxiety alone. In the same study, Mahalik et al. discovered that the relationship between a fearful attachment style and controlling behaviors was partially mediated by gender role stress, demonstrating that a negative model of both self and other is focused through a tendency to adhere to restrictive and maladaptive roles, and, in turn, leading to dangerous behaviors in relationships.

In general, direct evidence connecting men's childhood attachment bonds and adult attachment bonds to masculine role socialization suggests that insecure attachment may be an underlying factor in men's gender role strain (Blazina & Watkins, 2000; DeFranc & Mahalik, 2002; Fischer, 2007; Fischer & Good, 1998; Schwartz, 2004) and may even lead to problematic attitudes of women (Blazina & Watkins, 2000) and IPV (Mahalik et al., 2005). In other words, maladaptive views of self and other may predispose some men to rigidly adhere to traditional masculine role norms (Pollack, 1995). Gender role strain may result from the dysfunctional outcomes of those norms as well as the stress stemming from perceived role violations (gender role stress). Either way, insecurely attached men may be more likely to endorse problematic masculinity ideology and, in turn, may be even more likely to experience negative interpersonal consequences, thus increasing the chances of having the cognitive, behavioral, and affective experiences necessary for the creation and maintenance of harmful IPV attitudes.

Moreover, because IPV acceptance attitudes are likely affectively-laden and may be reinforced or created through attempts to manage or relieve negative affect, the inability

to manage negative affect may be an important component of men's gender role socialization in relation to IPV. Indeed, recent research suggests that men's gender role strain may be an essential component of violence and aggression and may be dependent on the ability to manage negative affect. In a series of controlled laboratory experiments, men's gender role conflict predicted aggression only when levels of negative affect were high (Cohn, Zeichner, & Seibert, 2008), and in a follow up study, the relationship between men's restrictive emotionality and aggression was mediated by an inability to regulate negative affect (Cohn, Jakupcak, Seibert, Hilderbandt & Zeichner, 2010). Variables related to affect regulation, such as adult attachment dimensions, therefore, may further explain the harmful consequences of gender role strain.

### **Important Gaps in the Literature and Research Questions**

Nearly all of the investigations cited in the preceding literature review of adult attachment, gender role strain, and IPV related variables are limited (e.g., the use of correlational designs, self-reported measures, and cross-sectional approaches). These limitations notwithstanding, there are several areas where investigators need to make substantive contributions to the literature. Primarily, researchers need to (a) address the lack of published research related to men's IPV acceptance attitudes in relation to adult attachment and gender role strain, (b) specifically examine college men's IPV attitudes, and (c) address the lack of research on men's gender role strain and acceptance of specific forms of IPV.

**The lack of research on IPV acceptance.** As mentioned in Chapter 1, changing attitudes related to IPV has been a central component of prevention and intervention programs targeting dating violence (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Foshee et al., 2005),

and IPV attitudes may be especially suited for primary prevention efforts. Yet, investigators have not adequately explored the social and relational predictors of IPV attitudes. The lack of research in this area is important to address, as much advancement has been made in the treatment and prevention of IPV, but comprehensive tests of the theoretical foundations supporting these treatments may not have kept up. Indeed, in an important meta-analytic review, Babcock, Green, and Robie (2004) suggested that it is not scientifically defensible to rely on only one method of treating IPV. This highlighted the importance of making treatment and prevention of IPV more inclusive of a wider variety of theoretical approaches.

Recently, researchers have embraced this challenge by developing treatment programs that include both cognitive and behavioral attitude change approaches along with discussions highlighting psychodynamic constructs (e.g., adult attachment) and gender role socialization (e.g., gender role strain) (Lawson et al., 2001; Lawson, 2010). By examining the relationships between IPV acceptance and adult attachment, researchers may provide important evidence for including adult attachment-relevant materials in programs aimed toward changing IPV attitudes. At the same time, a deeper understanding of the ways in which attachment and masculine gender role socialization work together to predict IPV attitudes may further highlight important avenues for addressing and correcting IPV acceptance.

**The importance of college men's IPV acceptance.** Dating violence is prevalent on college campuses, but it is important to note that the most severe partner violence (e.g., partner battering) is not as prevalent in college-age populations (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). Moreover, research suggests that court-referred men may have different

motivations for IPV compared to men who commit less severe IPV (Johson & Ferraro, 2000). Many studies providing indirect evidence to connect IPV acceptance attitudes to masculine gender role strain constructs and attachment anxiety have used court mandated men (e.g., Mahalik et al., 2005; Moore et al., 2008; Lawson et al., 2001; Lawson, 2010). Although these investigations are useful, they do not provide sufficient information to allow strong predictions regarding a college student population. Additionally, most studies have not controlled for social desirable responding effects. Provided the strong belief that “a man should not hit a woman”, it may be particularly important to assess and control for participants’ desire to present themselves in socially desirable ways. A thorough investigation of adult attachment and gender role strain controlling for social desirable responding in a large sample of college men, therefore, may offer a more detailed understanding of how attachment and gender role strain constructs work together to predict IPV acceptance attitudes in a non-clinical population.

**The Lack of gender role strain and IPV acceptance research.** Previous investigations have offered support to connect IPV acceptance to traditional gender role ideologies (Berkel, Vandiver, & Bahner, 2004; Lichter & McCloskey, 2004; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001); however, these studies mostly used high school or grade school populations, as well as instruments that may not actually tap the consequences of gender role socialization or the tendency to adhere to restrictive role norms. More importantly, although previous investigations suggest a connection between gender role conflict and rape myth acceptance, researchers have yet to examine gender role strain in relation to attitudes condoning physical and psychological IPV. Exploring the relationships between attitudes condoning specific forms of IPV and gender role strain, therefore, may provide

a more detailed picture of how the stress associated with violating traditional role norms and the psychological distress stemming from rigid adherence to dysfunctional role norms predict IPV attitudes.

### **Research Questions**

In an effort to address several gaps in the extant literature, the present study seeks to answer two important research questions about the combined contributions of adult attachment and gender role strain constructs to IPV acceptance attitudes. These questions have not been addressed in previous research.

*Q1: What is the relationship between adult attachment dimensions and attitudes condoning*

*physical, psychological, and sexual IPV?*

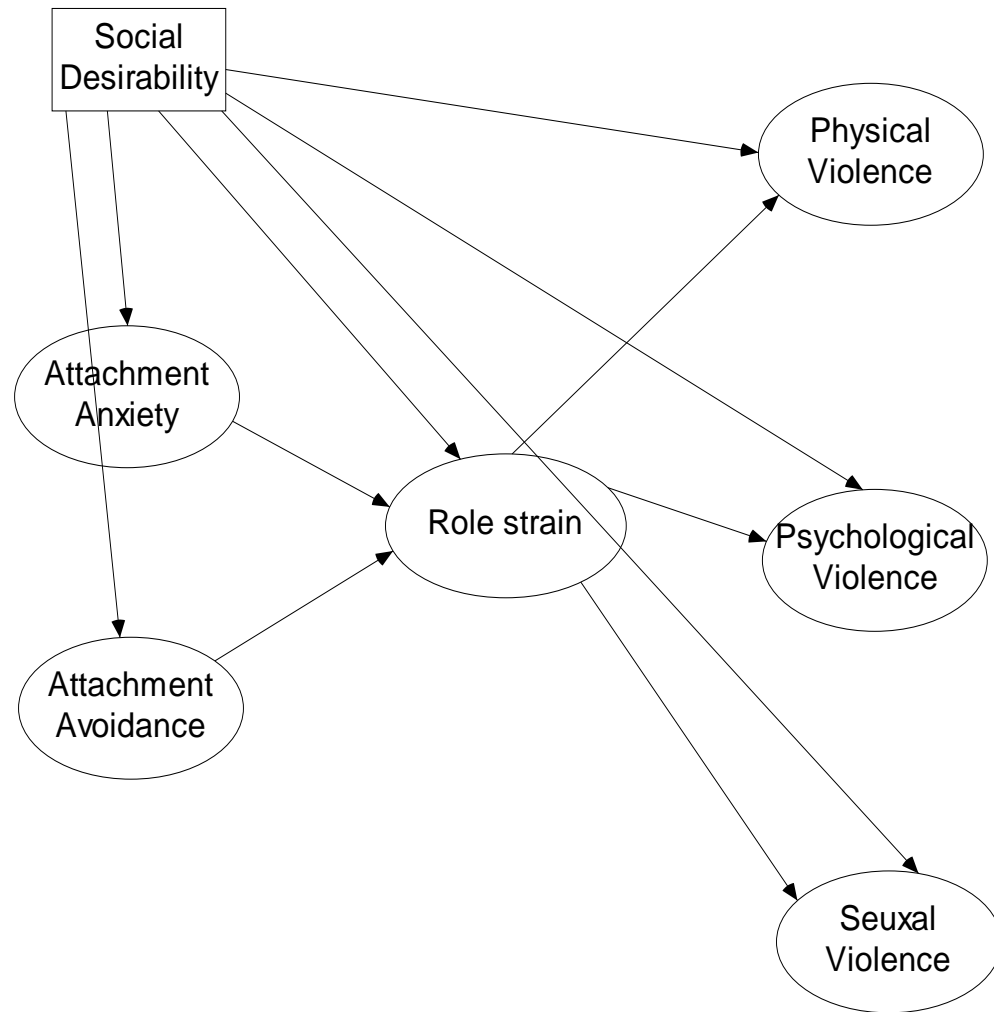
*Q2: How do adult attachment and gender role strain constructs work together to predict specific*

*IPV attitudes?*

### **A Testable Model**

Based on prior findings, particularly that gender role stress partially mediated the relationship between fearful attachment and controlling behaviors (e.g., Mahalik et al., 2005), the present study proposes a model in which the relationships between adult attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and attitudes condoning three different forms of IPV (physical, psychological, and sexual) are mediated by masculine gender role strain (gender role conflict and gender role stress) after controlling for social desirability. Figure 1 illustrates the indirect and direct connections in this model.





*Figure 1.* Hypothetical model illustrating the direct and indirect contributions of attachment dimensions on IPV acceptance attitudes when controlling for social desirability. All paths are expected to be positive. Disturbance terms (e.g., models of measurement error) for each of the latent variables will be included in the model but are not included in the present figure.

Direct paths are predicted from both adult attachment dimensions to gender role strain, which, in turn, has direct paths to attitudes condoning each of the three forms of IPV. Social desirability is included in this model, as society has placed strong injunctions on admitting thinking it is “okay” to hit or hurt an intimate partner, and this may affect men’s responses on measures of IPV acceptance. Direct paths from social desirability indicate that any variance in the other variables explained by social desirability will be taken into account in estimating the model. In addition, full mediation is demonstrated in this model, as there are no paths between adult attachment dimensions and IPV attitudes; however, as will be discussed in Chapter III, a variety of models will be examined, including a partially mediated model. Although Mahalik et al. (2005) reported partial mediation, they did not control for measurement error, and they did not include gender role conflict in their study. Thus, it is possible that a study controlling for measurement error and incorporating a larger picture of masculine role strain may produce different results.

### **Hypotheses**

H1: Given that a number of previous investigations have found robust connections between adult attachment and physical, psychological, and sexual IPV, adult attachment dimensions will be positively related to attitudes condoning specific forms of IPV.

H2: Provided that both a fearful and anxious attachment style have been connected to problematic adherence to traditional role norms, both adult attachment dimensions will be positively related to gender role strain.

H3: Because gender role strain has been connected to a fearful attachment orientation (e.g, high anxiety and high avoidance scores), adult attachment anxiety and avoidance will be positively related to masculine gender role strain.

H4: Given that gender role stress mediated the relationship between a fearful attachment style and controlling behaviors in a previous study (e.g. Mahalik et al., 2005), adult attachment anxiety and avoidance will be indirectly related to IPV attitudes through gender role strain.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Methodology and Results**

#### **Participants**

A total of 496 undergraduate heterosexual men participated in the present study. Participants were recruited from Math, Chemistry, Business, and Marketing classes by means of collaboration with instructors at the University of Houston. After missing data and multivariate outliers were removed (see Preliminary Analyses), 419 men were retained for the primary analysis. Participants varied in age ( $M = 22.29$ ,  $SD = 4.01$ ), and level of schooling (44.9% Junior, 23.9% Senior, 17.9% Sophomore, and 12.6% Freshman). The sample was also ethnically diverse: 28.5% White; 28.4 Asian; 11.9% Black; 14.5% Hispanic/Latino; 11% Indian; 4.5% Multiracial; and 1% Native American. Additionally, SES of participants varied, as men reported that their mother or father's highest level of education as a high school diploma (33%), a bachelor's degree (29.8%), a masters degree (12.6%), less than high school (10.5%), or a doctoral degree (6.2%).

#### **Procedure**

Upon receipt of institutional review approval, professors were contacted to see if they would offer extra credit for study participation. Only students whose professors agreed to allow extra credit in exchange for participation were recruited for this study. Participants were provided class handouts with a link to a web survey entitled, "Men and Relationships". Upon entering the site, participants read and provided informed consent to participate in the study. A waiver of documentation of informed consent was submitted to the institutional review board in order to avoid having students enter any identifying information at this part of the survey. Participants were then directed to an on-line

questionnaire consisting of several brief self-report instruments and a demographics page. After completing the survey, participants were then directed to a separate website where they filled out all the necessary information in order to ensure that their instructors allocated extra credit accurately. This process ensured that participants' answers were anonymous, because their responses were kept separate and could not be linked to their questionnaire responses. The amount of extra credit and the way in which it is distributed was determined by each instructor and ranged from .05% to 1% of the final course grade. Additionally, the instructors were not able to access any students' responses to the questionnaire portion of the study, but a list of students from each class who completed the study was provided to instructors upon request.

### **Instruments**

**Demographics.** Participants completed a short demographic questionnaire indicating their age, gender, sexual orientation, level of parents' education, grade level, and ethnicity.

**Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Revised** (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). The ECR-R is the revised version of the original ECR (Brennan et al., 1998). Like the original ECR, the ECR-R measures adult attachment dimensions. Brennan et al. (1998) conducted a factor analysis of items from widely used measures of adult attachment, and they found that two orthogonal factors best explained the data: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. The ECR-R consists of 36-items assessing the two dimensions of attachment. The *Avoidance* subscale (18 items) taps fears of intimacy, discomfort with vulnerability, and dependence in relationships, and the *Anxiety* subscale (18 items) taps fears of rejection and abandonment in relationships.

Respondents use a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) to indicate how well each item characterizes their feelings about close relationships, with higher scores indicating greater Avoidance and Anxiety scores, respectively. Both the ECR and the ECR-R have consistently produced excellent coefficient alphas across several studies, and the ECR-R correlates highly with the original ECR (Mikuliner & Shaver, 2007). The validity of the ECR has been established in several studies in both romantic and non-romantic contexts, as the attachment dimensions have been associated with depression (Wei, Heppner, Russell, & Young, 2006), psychological distress (Lopez, Mauricio, Gormley, Simko, & Berger, 2001; Lopez, Mitchell, & Gormley, 2002), sexual coerciveness (Smallbone & Dadds, 2001), and psychological abuse (Gormley & Lopez, 2010a).

**Gender Role Conflict Scale** (GRCS; O'Neil et al., 1986). The GRCS measures men's dysfunction strain from rigid adherence to traditional role norms. The GRCS is comprised of four subscales: *Success, Power, and Competition* (SPC); *Restricted Emotionality* (RE); *Restricted Affectionate Behavior Between Men* (RABBM); and *Conflict Between Work and Family Relations* (CBWFR). The 37 items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate a greater degree of gender role conflict. O'Neil et al. (1986) reported internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) of .85, .82, .83, and .75 ( $N = 527$ ) and 4-week test-retest reliabilities of .84, .76, .86, and .72 ( $N = 17$ ) for SPC, RE, RABBM, and CBWFR, respectively. Construct validity of the GRCS subscales has been demonstrated in a number of studies reporting moderate positive correlations with depression, fear of intimacy, relationship dysfunction, and depression (O'Neil, 2008), as well as moderate

correlations with measures of masculine gender role stress (Fischer, 2007; Mahalik & Lagan, 2001; Walker, Tokar, & Fischer, 2000) and conformity to traditional role norms (Berger, Levant, McMilan, Kelleher, & Sellers, 2005; Levant, Rankin, Williams, Hasan, & Smalley, 2010; O'Neil, 2008).

**Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale** (MGRS; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). The MGRS measures the extent to which men experience stress in situations that challenge traditionally defined cultural standards of masculinity. The MGRS consists of 40 questions assessing gender role stress in five interrelated domains: physical inadequacy, emotional inexpressiveness, subordination to women, intellectual inferiority, and performance failures. Items are rated on a 6-point scale from 0 (*not stressful*) to 5 (*extremely stressful*), and higher scores indicate greater levels of perceived stress regarding violation of role norms. Coefficient alphas for the MGRS full scale are reported to range from .88 to .94 (Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002; Mahalik et al., 2005; Thompson, 1991). MGRS total scores have been associated with IPV (Copenhaver, Lash, & Eisler, 2000; Moore et al., 2008), hostility and anger (Eisler, Skidmore, & Ward, 1988), fearful attachment (Mahalik, Aldarondo, Gilber-Gokhale, & Shore, 2005), cardiovascular reactivity (Lash, Eisler, & Schulman, 1990), and adherence to traditional role norms (Cohn & Zeichner, 2006; Jakupack et al., 2002; Parrot, 2009; Parrot, Peterson, Vincent, & Bakerman, 2008).

**Marlowe and Crown Social Desirability Scale** (MCSDS; Crowne & Marlow, 1960). The MCDS measures a general propensity to distort one's self-presentation by responding in a favorable, socially accepted fashion. The MCSDS measures socially desirable responding with 33 items in a forced-choice (*1 True or 0 False*) format. After

recoding for reverse scored questions, higher scores indicate more social desirable response patterns. A sample item is, "I am always courteous, even with people who are disagreeable." The MCSDS has been shown to have adequate internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) ranging from .73 to .88 (Robinson, Shaver & Wrightsman, 1991). The MCSDS has been shown to correlate with IPV attitudes (Fincham et al., 2008).

**Intimate Partner Violence Attitude Scale-Revised (IPVAS-R;** Fincham et al., 2008). The IPVAS-R is a revised version of the IPVAS (Smith, Thompson, Tomaka, & Buchanan, 2005), which was developed to measure acceptance of IPV. Fincham et al. (2008) noted that the IPVAS was originally normed on a small, primarily Mexican, sample, so they re-normed the IPVAS on a diverse sample of men and women to create the IPVAS-R. The IPVAS-R consists of 23 items assessing the degree to which respondents condone the use of physical and psychological abuse in dating and intimate relationships. The IPVAS-R measures acceptance of IPV in three domains: psychological abuse (*Abuse*; 8 items e.g., "During a heated argument, it is okay for me to bring up something from my partner's past to hurt him or her."), physical violence (*Violence*; 4 items e.g., "It would never be appropriate to hit or try to hit one's partner with an object." [reverse scored]), and controlling behaviors (*Control*; 7 items e.g., "It is okay for me to tell my partner not talk to someone of the opposite sex."). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate a greater endorsement of attitudes condoning IPV. Fincham et al. (2008) reported Coefficient alphas for each of the subscales of the IPVAS-R, as ranging from .68 to .91, with the lowest alpha corresponding to the Control subscale. At the same time, they reported test-retest reliability over a 14-week period ranging from .39 to .58. The Control



subscale of the IPVAS-R reported the lowest test-retest reliability. Fincham et al. (2008) also demonstrated the construct validity of the IPVAS, as all three subscales produced significant positive correlations with self-reported psychological aggression. Only the Violence and Abuse scales, however, were related to self-reported physical IPV. Given that the Control scale has not been connected to physical violence, and provided that it produced the lowest test-retest and internal consistency coefficients, the present study excluded this subscale from analysis.

**Attitudes toward Male Dating Violence** (AMDV; Price & Byers, 1999). The AMDV assess attitudes toward men's dating violence against women. The AMDV consists of three subscales: *Attitudes toward Male Psychological Dating Violence* (AMDV-Psych; 15 items e.g., "A guy should not insult his girlfriend"[reverse scored]), *Attitudes toward Male Physical Dating Violence* (AMDV-Phys; 12 items, e.g., "Some girls deserve to be slapped by their boyfriends"), and *Attitudes toward Male Sexual Dating Violence* (AMDV-Sex; 12 items, e.g., "When a guy pays on a date, it is okay for him to pressure his girlfriend for sex"). Items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate a greater endorsement of attitudes condoning men's dating violence against women. Price and Byers (1999) reported coefficient alphas of ranging from .85 to .81. Pryce and Byers (1999) also provided evidence for the construct validity of the AMDV scales, as all three subscales have been positively correlated with traditional views of women and dating violence perpetration. Subsequent investigations provided additional evidence for the validity and reliability of the AMDV scales, as subscale scores have been correlated with multiple forms of dating violence (Josephson & Proulx, 2008; Luthra & Gidycz, 2006; Sears,

Byers, & Price, 2007) and have produced adequate internal consistency coefficients in Mexican (Hokada et al., 2006) and Tai samples (Pradubmook-Sherer, 2011)

## **Chapter V**

### **Results**

#### **Preliminary Analyses**

Prior to conducting the main analysis, data were screened for missing values. Of the 496 male participants, 58 were removed from the sample because they left entire sections of the survey unanswered, with several of these individuals not completing anything past their initial informed consent. Of the remaining 438 participants, some had missing data. The largest percentage of participants with missing data (17% of the sample) was relegated to the Gender Role Stress Scale leaving between one to three items on the 40-item instrument unanswered. For the AMDV subscales, a smaller percentage (.05% of the sample) left between .03% (1 question) to .08% (3 questions) of each subscale incomplete. Likewise, approximately .05% of the sample left between one and three questions blank on the 36-item ECR-R, 03% neglected to complete between one and two questions of the 12-question IPVAS-R, and .05% of the sample left between one and two questions blank on the MCSDS.

A series of one-way ANOVAs with an adjusted alpha of .005 were used to determine if missing data may represent a Missing Completely at Random (MCAR), Missing at Random (MAR), or a non-ignorable missing pattern. Results indicated that men with missing data on the Gender Role Stress Scale reported significantly higher levels of endorsement of psychological violence on the IPVAS-R Abuse subscale than did men without missing data. However, men with missing data on the Gender Role Conflict Scale reported significantly lower levels of endorsement of psychological violence attitudes on the same subscale compared to men with complete data.

Additionally, there were no race, age, SES, or education differences between men with missing data and men with complete data. Although these results indicated either a missing at random or a non-ignorable missing pattern, the percentage of men with missing data on the IPVAS-R and AMDV subscales was minimal, and there were no significant differences between missing and complete responses on these subscales on any other scales in the sample. Thus, individual item mean substitution was used to fill in missing responses and calculate complete subscale scores. As recommended by Meyers, Glenn, and Guarino (2006), the imputed data set was compared with the non-imputed data set by examining the correlation matrix of both in order to determine if the imputed data changed the strength or direction of relationships between variables. This comparison did not reveal any differences, possibly due to the use of an individual item-mean substitution procedure rather than an overall mean substitution approach which can lead to artificially reducing the variability of variables (Meyers et al., 2006).

Once missing data were imputed, data were screened for problematic univariate and multivariate outliers. Nineteen univariate outliers in the sample were identified and explored in more detail. Upon closer inspection, all 19 men may not have been answering the survey truthfully or accurately, as they either completed the survey in less than 10 minutes (most participants took approximately 45 minutes), or they answered all survey items using the same value (e.g., answering 5 on all items). As such, those 19 men were removed from the sample. Next, multivariate outliers were examined by computing Mahalanobis distances. No significant multivariate outliers were detected, leaving a final sample of 419 men with complete responses.

In order to meet the assumptions necessary for the primary analysis, maximum likelihood estimation, the sample was also screened for any significant deviations of normality. An examination of skew and kurtosis values revealed that IPVAS-R subscale scores were severely skewed, indicating that most men in the sample strongly disagreed with attitudes condoning physical and psychological violence. Likewise, AMDV Violence and AMDV Sex subscale scores were also skewed, though not to the same degree. Following the recommendations of Meyers, Glenn, and Guarino (2006), a series of transformations (e.g., square root, inverse, and logarithmic) were explored in order to create a more normal distribution. Although logarithmic transformations successfully corrected the distribution of the AMDV Sex subscale scores, the degrees of skew and kurtosis were not adequately transformed for IPVAS-R Violence, AMDV Violence, and the IPVAS-R Abuse subscale scores, which were still moderately (three to four times the standard error of measurement of skew or kurtosis) to severely (nine to ten times the standard error of measurement of skew or kurtosis) deviated from a normal distribution. Lastly, bivariate correlations and estimates of internal consistency were examined. Table 1 displays the interrelationships between key variables along with means, standard deviations, and internal consistency estimates in the all-male sample. Although the means and standard deviations of each variable in the present sample were similar to those reported in previous research, the AMDV Psych subscale scores yielded lower internal consistency estimates than those originally reported in the original validation study (e.g., Price & Byers, 1999)

Table 1  
*Intercorrelations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach Alphas*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$
1. Attachment Anxiety	-----	.30***	.29***	.24***	.19***	.22***	.20***	.27***	.06	-.21***	3.59	1.22	.94
2. Attachment Avoidance		-----	.23***	.21***	.21***	.30***	.39***	.30***	.25***	-.10	3.16	1.07	.92
3. Gender Role Conflict			-----	.30***	.16**	.05	.11*	.14**	.07	-.18***	3.82	.67	.91
4. Gender Role Stress				-----	.14**	.09	.15**	.12*	.08	-.12**	3.29	.83	.94
5. AMDV Psych					-----	.60***	.67***	.55***	.25***	-.20***	2.57	.60	.76
6. AMDV Violence						-----	.70***	.48***	.45***	-.08	1.87	.82	.86
7. AMDV Sex							-----	.55***	.43***	-.13**	2.08	.80	.85
8. IPVAS-R Abuse								-----	.42***	-.14**	2.37	.95	.76
9. IPVAS-R Violence									-----	.05	6.04	1.48	.86
10. Social Desirability										-----	.49	.14	.67

Note: AMDV Psych = Attitudes Toward Male Dating Psychological violence, AMDV Violence = Attitudes Toward Male Dating physical Violence, AMDV Sex = Attitudes Toward Male Dating Sexual violence, IPVAS-R Abuse = Intimate Partner Violence Attitudes-Revised Scale psychological violence, IPVAS-R Violence = Intimate Partner Violence Attitudes-Revised Scale physical Violence.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### **Primary Analysis**

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation was used in order to examine the combined contributions of adult attachment dimensions and gender role strain constructs toward IPV acceptance attitudes. All analyses used the AMOS-7 software program (Arbuckle, 2006). Because SEM involves the creation of latent (i.e., unobserved) variables from observed (i.e., manifest) variables tapping common constructs, the procedure allowed for the modeling of measurement error. Comparatively, most statistical procedures, such as multiple regression, do not take into account measurement error. Several studies have also suggested the SEM is particularly suited for testing mediation (Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). Despite the benefits of SEM, one potential drawback is that it requires a relatively large sample size. Following preliminary analyses and case deletions, the retained sample of 419 men was well within the parameters established by Hatcher (1994), who argued that the sample must be greater than 150 and must have at least 5 participants for every freely estimated parameter, and Kline (2005) who suggested that at least 10 participants to every freely-estimated parameter is an adequate sample size.

As recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and Holmbeck (1997), the primary analysis consisted of four basic steps: estimating a measurement model, estimating a structural model, determining which model to use to test indirect effects (i.e., fully mediated or partially mediated), and using a bootstrap procedure to estimate the significance of indirect effects. Estimating the measurement model consists of performing a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to analyze the latent variables'

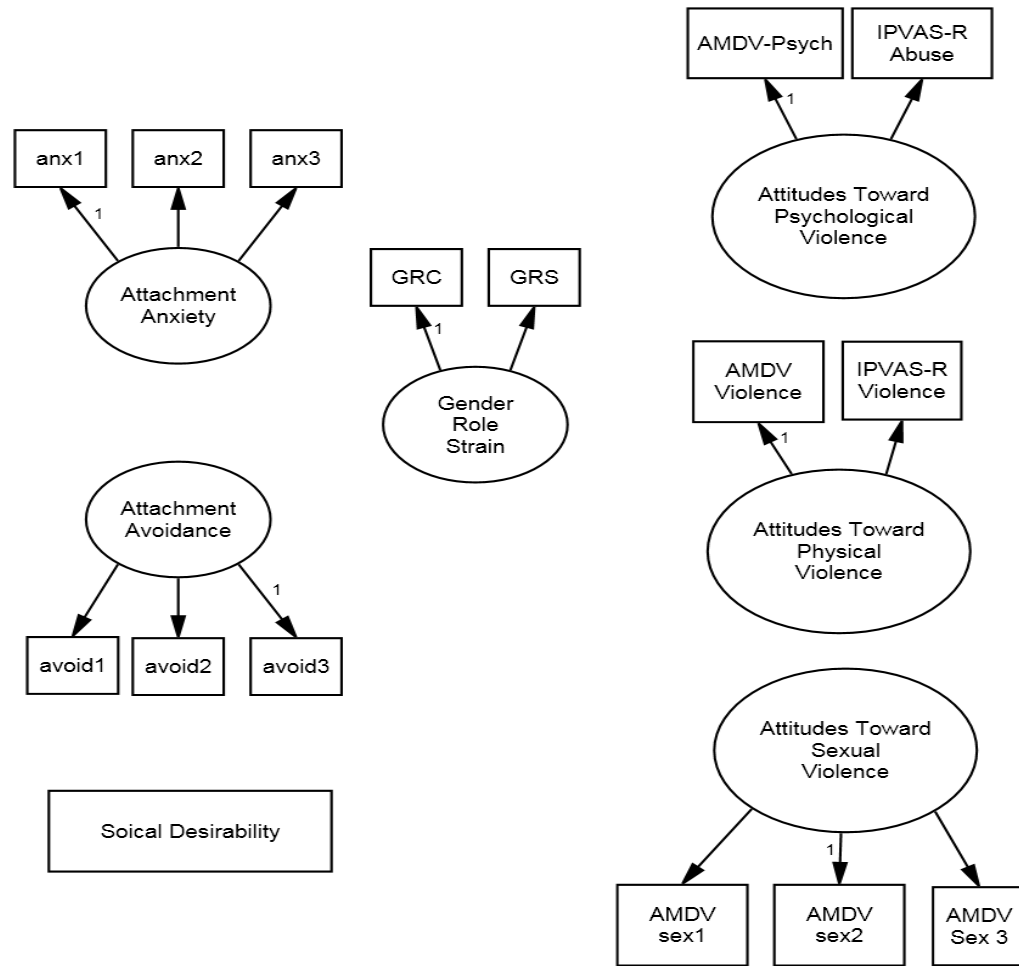
structure without indicating directional paths between latent constructs. Once an adequately fitting measurement model is verified, a Structural Regression (SR) analysis determines the directional relationships between latent constructs as specified by the model. The purpose of these first two steps is to ensure that any goodness-of-fit problems that may be evident in the SR model are not due to misspecification of the measurement model. Next, nested model comparisons are used to determine if a fully mediated SR model is a better fit to the data than a partially mediated model. Lastly, a bootstrap procedure estimates the significance of indirect effects in the mediated model with the best fit to the data. Additionally, and in accordance with a number of recommendations (e.g., Kline, 2005; Martens, 2005), alternative and equivalent models are examined to further elaborate the scholarly contribution of study findings.

Both the measurement model and the SR models were evaluated using the chi-square goodness of fit test and several indices of fit to supplement the chi-square. An absolute fit index, the Root mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) with a 90% confidence interval, was used to evaluate how closely the specified covariance matrix matched the observed covariance matrix. Additionally, two indices of relative fit, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI), were used to evaluate the fit of each model compared to an independence model (where no paths are estimated) and a saturated model (where all paths are estimated and the data fit the model perfectly). Although conventional cutoff scores for determining an adequately fitting models suggested a CFI and NFI  $>.90$ , and a RSMEA between .00 and .10 (See Marsh, 1995 for a review), Hu and Bentler (1999) noted that the following cutoff scores were most accurate in reducing Type I and Type II errors for model acceptance and rejection: CFI



$>.95$ ,  $\text{NFI} > .95$ ,  $\text{RMSEA} \leq .05$  with a lower-bound confidence interval of .00 and the upper-bound confidence interval  $<.10$ , and a model chi-square significance value  $> .05$ . However, the model chi-square statistic is often biased with large sample sizes (Kline, 2005), so a normed chi-square statistic (i.e., model chi-square divided by the model's degrees of freedom) was also examined. Kline (2005) suggested that values of the normed chi-square between 2.0 and 5.0 indicate an acceptable fit.

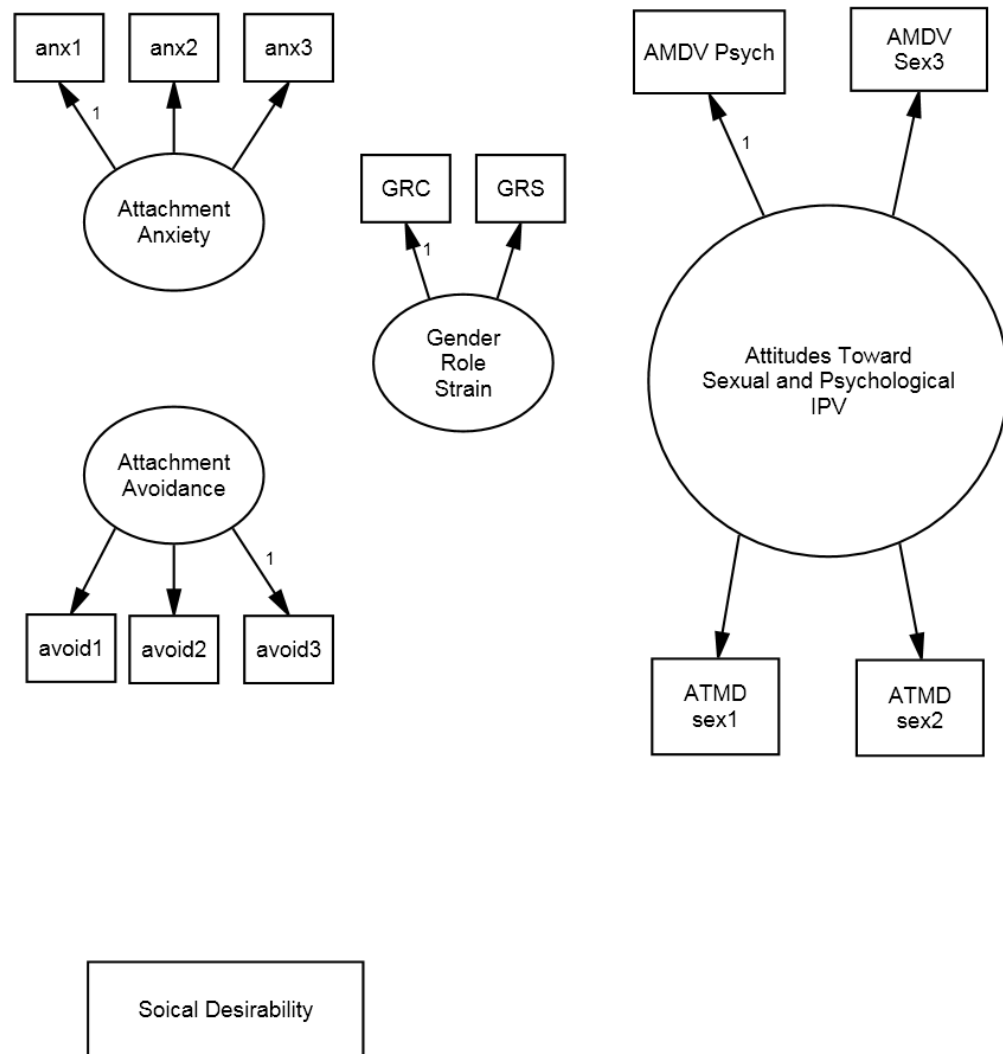
**Step1: measurement model.** Figure 2 illustrates the measurement model for the present study. Three item parcels were created using the Anxiety subscale scores of the ECR-R and then were used to form the Attachment Anxiety latent variable. Likewise, the Attachment Avoidance latent variable was formed with three item parcels of the ECR-R Avoidance subscale. The Gender Role Strain latent variable was formed with the total scores of the MGRS and GRCS, respectively. The Attitudes Toward Psychological Violence latent variable was formed using the subscale scores from the IPVAS-R Abuse and AMDV Psych subscales. The Attitudes Toward Physical Violence latent variable was formed using subscale scores from the IPVAS-R- Violence and AMDV Violence subscales; whereas, three item parcels of the AMDV Sex subscale scores were used to form the Attitudes Toward Sexual Violence latent variable. The use of item parcels is common in measurement models (Russell, Kahn, Spoth, & Altmaier, 1998), and it ensured that each latent variable had at least two indicators, which is important for model identification (Kline, 2005).



*Figure 2.* Measurement model illustrating the formation of each latent variable. All latent variables will have freely estimated covariances between each other for the final CFA. Those covariances are not depicted here in order to increase readability

An initial test of the measurement model revealed an inadmissible solution. Specifically, impossible values consisting of negative error variances and impossibly high regression coefficients ( $\beta > 1$ ) were present for the manifest variables forming the Attitudes Toward Physical Violence latent variable, despite breaking up each indicator for this latent variable into two or more item parcels in order to increase the number of parameters. According to Kline (2005), inadmissible solutions may result from a variety

of causes, including violations of the assumptions needed to perform the appropriate estimation. Maximum likelihood estimation requires normally distributed data, and the indicators of the Physical Violence latent variable were highly skewed. Moreover, an alternative estimation procedure, such as an asymptotically distribution-free estimation, was not appropriate with the current sample size. Given these considerations, the measurement model was respecified to only include the psychological and sexual violence latent variables, and the skewed IPVAS-R Abuse manifest variable was removed. A test of the respecified model, however, yielded correlations between the sexual violence latent variable and the psychological violence latent variable greater than one. Kline (2005) lists model misspecification as another important cause of inadmissible results. Given the high correlation between the psychological and sexual violence latent variables, the two constructs were collapsed to make one latent variable measuring men's endorsement of psychological and sexual violence attitudes concurrently (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* Respecified Measurement model illustrating the removal of all skewed IPVAS-R subscale scores and AMDV Violence subscale scores. All latent variables have freely estimated covariances between each other for the final CFA. Those covariance's are not depicted here in order to increase readability.

Prior research had suggested that both psychological and sexual violence are rooted in a need for power and control (Pence & Paymer, 1999), thus providing a theoretical justification for collapsing these two latent variables. Indeed, a test of the respecified model produced admissible results, but some fit indices for the model were only approaching an adequate fit,  $\chi^2(56, N = 419) = 240.973, p < .000, \chi^2/df = 3.84$  (CFI = .94; NFI = .91; RMSEA = .08, 90% confidence interval [CI] = .07-.09). An examination of the modification indices revealed that adding two error covariances between item parcels would improve model fit. Kline (2005) suggested that specifying error covariances is acceptable when items overlap conceptually or in content. Given that item parcels represent highly interrelated segments of a common scale, error covariances appeared appropriate for those parcels with theoretical and conceptual overlap. Thus, two error covariances were added to the model: one for the sexual violence parcels and one between an attachment anxiety parcel and an attachment avoidance parcel with very similar content. The results of these modifications improved model fit substantially,  $\chi^2(54, N = 419) = 183.88, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 3.41, (CFI = .95; NFI = .93; RMSEA = .08, 90\% \text{ confidence interval [CI] = .06-.09})$ . As can be seen in Table 2, all of the factor loadings of the measured variables on the latent variables were statistically significant. Therefore, all of the latent variables appear to have been adequately measured by their respective indicators. Additionally, the correlations among the independent latent variables, the mediator latent variable (e.g., Gender Role Strain), and the dependent latent variable were statistically significant (see Table 3).

Table 2  
*Factor Loading for the Measurement Model*

Measured Variable	Unstandardized Factor Loadings	SE	Standardized Factor Loadings
Attachment Anxiety			
Anxiety 1	1.28	.07	.81***
Anxiety 2	1.05	.05	.88***
Anxiety 3	1.01	.06	.78***
Attachment Avoidance			
Avoidance 1	.98	.05	.81***
Avoidance 2	1.04	.05	.86***
Avoidance 3	1.00	.04	.90***
Gender Role Strain			
GRC	.43	.06	.57***
GRS	.39	.05	.53***
Attitudes Toward Sexual & Psychological IPV			
AMDV Psych	.42	.03	.71***
AMDV Sex 1	.15	.01	.79***
AMDV Sex 2	.17	.01	.81***
AMDV Sex 3	.16	.01	.79***

*Note:* GRC = Gender Role Conflict; GRS = Gender Role Stress; AMDV = Attitudes toward Male Dating Violence; Psych = Psychological violence; Sex = Sexual Violence.  
 \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 3  
*Correlations Among Latent Variables and Social Desirability for the Measurement Model*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attachment Anxiety	-----	.35***	.52***	.28***	-.28***
2. Attachment Avoidance		-----	.40***	.40***	-.22***
3. Gender Role Strain			-----	.28***	-.28**
4. IPV Attitudes				-----	-.15*
5. Social Desirability					-----

Note: N=419.

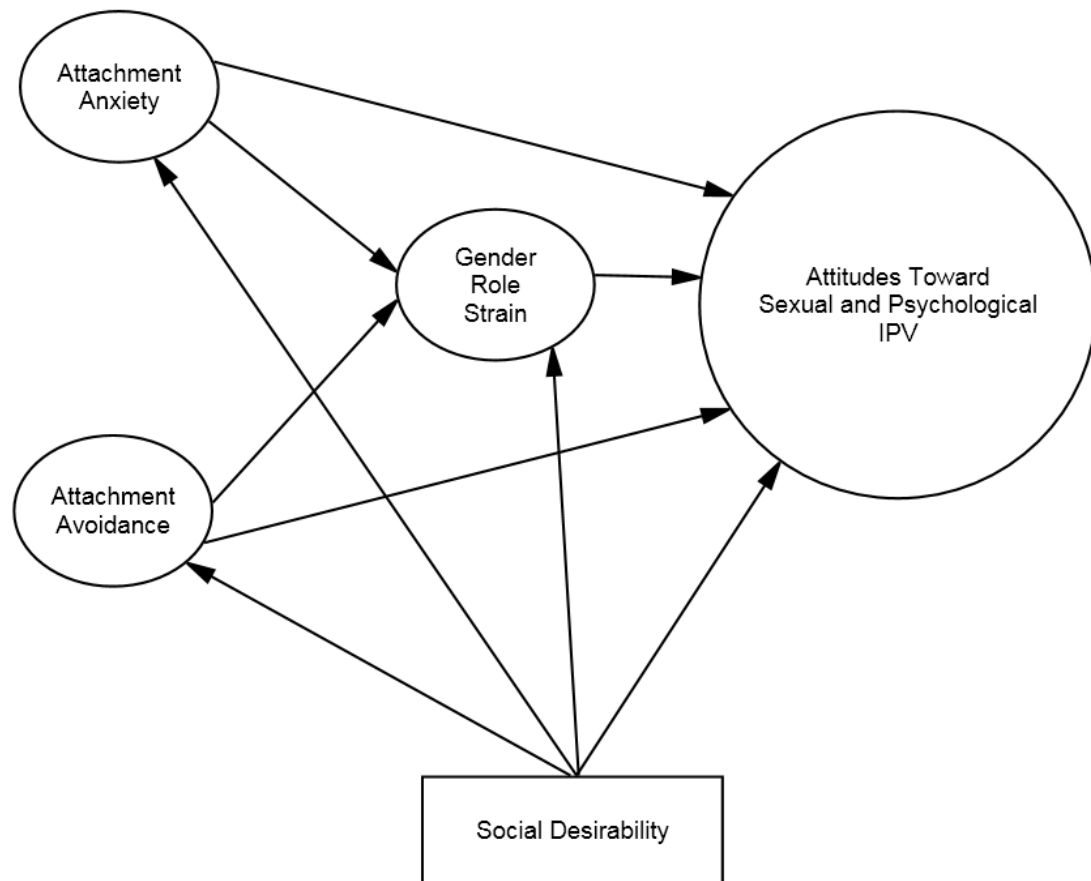
\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Step 2: structural regression model.** Using the respecified measurement model, a structural model was tested (see Figure 4). An initial test of the structural model indicated that it was not as good a fit to the data as the measurement model,  $\chi^2(55, N = 419) = 222.34, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 4.04$  (CFI = .93; NFI = .91; RMSEA = .09, 90% confidence interval [CI] = .07, .10). Because the measurement model provided an adequate fit to the data, additional exploration of the structural model was warranted. The modification indices indicated that the model could be substantially improved by correlating disturbance terms for the two anxiety latent variables. Disturbance terms represent the variance unexplained by their presumed causes, and they were not present in the measurement model. Considering that error variances between the two attachment latent variables were shown to correlate in the measurement model and improve model fit, and accounting for the fact that both attachment latent variables were derived from manifest variables from the same scale, in theory, the two latent variables may share a common conceptual root. Therefore, a covariance was added between the two

disturbance terms for the attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance latent variables.

This change improved model fit,  $\chi^2(54, N = 419) = 183.88, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 3.45$  (CFI = .95; NFI = .93 RMSEA = .08, 90% confidence interval [CI] = .06, .08). As such, the respecified structural model was used for determining the best fit for further tests of mediation effects.





*Figure 4.* Structural model. Disturbance terms are not shown here in order to improve readability.

**Step 3: testing the mediated model.** Holmbeck's (1997) suggested a specific sequence of analyses in order to test mediated structural models. First, a model was examined that only tested the direct effects from the two predictors (Anxiety and Avoidance latent variables) to the dependent variable (IPVAS-R attitudes). Holmbeck (1997) argued that if the relationship between the predictor variables and criterion variables are significant, the model will have met the requirements for testing a mediation effect. Both direct paths to the IPV attitudes latent variable were significant in this model at  $p < .001$ . Thus, the model met the minimum requirements for testing mediation. Next, partially mediated models were compared to a fully mediated model using the nested chi-square difference test. Three different partially mediated scenarios were tested: (1) a direct path to IPV attitudes from anxiety and gender role strain only and the path from avoidance to IPV attitudes constrained to zero, (2) a direct path to IPV attitudes from avoidance and gender role strain and the path from anxiety to IPV attitudes constrained to zero, and (3) direct paths from both anxiety and avoidance to gender role strain, and the paths from both attachment dimensions to IPV attitudes constrained to zero. Fit statistics for each competing model are displayed in Table 4. A partially mediated model with paths from anxiety and avoidance to the IPV acceptance attitudes produced the best fit to the data compared to a fully mediated model ( $\Delta \chi^2=19.02, \Delta df=2, p=.000$ ). However, the more parsimonious model with gender role strain completely mediating the relationship between attachment anxiety and IPV acceptance attitudes but only partially mediating the relationship between attachment avoidance and IPV acceptance attitudes was equally a good fit to the data ( $\Delta \chi^2=2.16, \Delta df=1, p=.14$ ). Therefore, the latter model was retained and used for testing the significance of indirect effects.

Table 4

*Goodness-of-Fit Indicators for Competing Nested Mediated Models*

Model	<i>df</i>	$\chi^2$	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	NFI	RMSEA [90% CI]
Partially Mediated	54	183.88***	3.41	.95	.93	.08 [.06, .09]
Partially Mediated for Avoidance only	55	186.04***	3.38	.95	.93	.08 [.06, .09]
Partially Mediated for Anxiety only	55	199.79***	3.63	.94	.92	.08 [.07, .09]
Fully Mediated	56	202.89***	3.62	.94	.92	.08 [.07, .09]

*Note:*  $N = 419$ .  $\chi^2/df$  = Normed Chi-square; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; RMSEA = Root-Mean Square Error of Approximation; 90% CI = 90% Confidence Interval for the RMSEA.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Step 4: significance testing for indirect effects.** Lastly, as recommended by Shrout and Bogler (2002), a bootstrapping procedure was used to test the significance of the indirect effects of the mediated model with the best fit to the data. Shrout and Bogler (2002) demonstrated that traditional methods of testing the indirect effects of a mediated model, such as the Sobel test, assume that indirect effects are normally distributed. They argued that this assumption can be problematic, as indirect effects usually do not have a normal distribution, thus causing the Sobel test to miss the presence of significant indirect effects. A bootstrap procedure addresses this constraint by yielding asymmetric confidence limits (Shrout & Bogler, 2002). The bootstrapping procedure consists of creating 2,000 bootstrap samples through random sampling with replacement and then running the hypothesized model 2,000 times with these 2,000 boot samples to obtain confidence intervals and standard errors with which to determine the significance of the

indirect effects. The results of the bootstrap analysis are displayed in Table 5, while Figure 5 illustrates standardized direct effects of the final partially mediated model.

Table 5  
*Bootstrap Analysis of Magnitude and Significance of Indirect Effects*

Predictor Variable	Mediator Variable	Criterion Variable	Standardized Indirect Effect	90% Confidence Level	SE	Significance level
Anxiety→	Role Strain→	IPV Attitudes	.09	.01 -- .20	.06	$p = .05$
Avoidance→	Role Strain→	IPV Attitudes	.05	.01 -- .13	.04	$p = .03$

*Note:* N = 419. IPV Attitudes = Attitudes Toward Psychological and Sexual Violence.

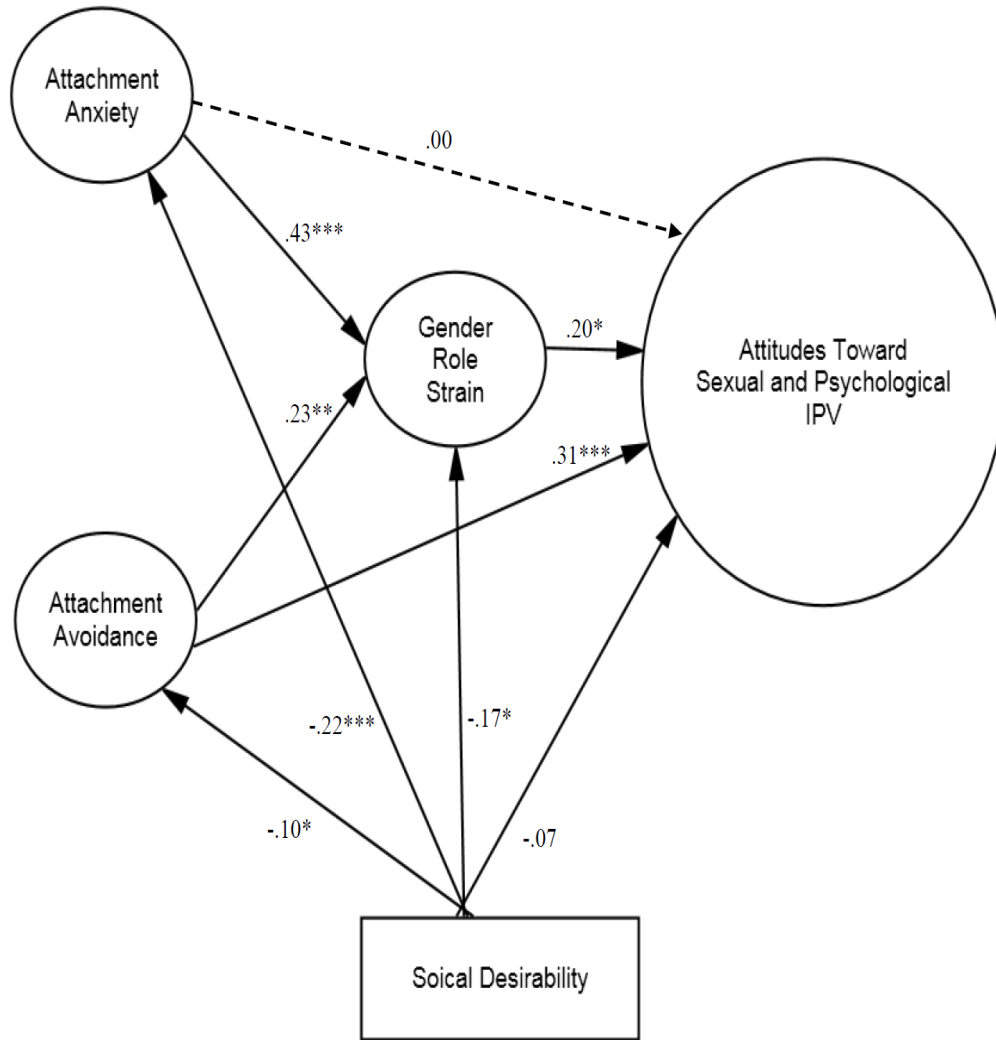


Figure 5. Mediated structural model. Dashed line indicates that the parameter was constrained to zero.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

**Testing alternative and equivalent models.** In order to shed additional light on the present findings, an alternative model and a variety of equivalent models were explored to determine if the partially mediated hypothesized model was indeed the best fitting and theoretically justifiable model. First, an alternative model in which no mediation was specified (e.g., all direct paths leading to IPV acceptance attitudes) was

examined. This model provided a poor fit to the data compared to the hypothesized partially mediated model,  $\chi^2(56, N = 419) = 235.15, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 4.21$  (CFI = .93; NFI = .91 RMSEA = .08, 90% confidence interval [CI] = .08, .10). Additionally, a chi-square difference test revealed that the partially mediated model was a better fit than a non-mediated model ( $\Delta \chi^2 = 51.64, \Delta df = 2, p < .001$ ), suggesting that a mediation model may be a better approximation of the true relationships between attachment, gender role strain, and IPV acceptance attitudes in the current sample.

Next, equivalent models were assessed. Kline (2005) recommended testing equivalent models in order to limit model confirmation bias and to demonstrate, with theory, that the retained model was most appropriate. Because each model has the same number of paths as the hypothesized partially mediated model, the nested model chi-square difference test is not appropriate, and justification for the retained model (i.e., the model identified by the present study) must be based on conceptual and theoretical arguments. The first equivalent model changed the order of the mediator variables, such that the relationship between gender role strain and intimate partner violence acceptance attitudes was partially mediated by attachment dimensions. As expected, this model produced an identical fit to the data as the hypothesized model,  $\chi^2(54, N = 419) = 183.88, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 3.45$  (CFI = .95; NFI = .93 RMSEA = .08, 90% confidence interval [CI] = .06, .08). Likewise, a model placing IPV acceptance attitudes as the independent variable and attachment dimensions as the dependent variable partially mediated by gender role strain produced identical indices of fit,  $\chi^2(54, N = 419) = 183.88, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 3.45$  (CFI = .95; NFI = .93 RMSEA = .08, 90% confidence interval [CI] = .06, .08).

Because the present study is correlational in nature, it is impossible to determine causality. Thus, changing the directions of paths did not impact model fit; yet, it is may be less likely that IPV acceptance attitudes lead to attachment insecurity and then influence gender role strain. For instance, one important factor in mediation analysis is the temporal order of the variables (Mackinnon, Krull, and Lockwood, 2000). Although the present study is cross- sectional (single time point), attachment theory argues that adult attachment orientations emerge ontogenetically from emotional bonds forged with primary caregivers in early childhood (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Consequently, gender role strain is believed to be a product of adherence to rigid, patriarchal gender roles and has been explored primarily in adults (Pleck, 1995). As such, it is possible that adult attachment dimensions, which represent core beliefs and tendencies in relationships established, in part, at an early age through parental relationships, may be more distal predictors of men's acceptance of IPV attitudes. By contrast, men's rigid adherence to sexist values that maintain power dynamics between men and women may be more proximal predictors of beliefs condoning the use of IPV, especially considering that IPV is believed to be a consequence of controlling and dominant behaviors in relationships (Pence & Paymer, 1999). Taking previous literature and theoretical conceptualizations into account, therefore, the hypothesized mediated model likely represents a closer approximation of the true direction of the relationships between adult attachment dimensions, gender role strain, and IPV acceptance attitudes than either of the equivalent models.

## **Chapter V:**

### **Discussion**

The present study extended previous research by examining the direct and indirect contributions of adult attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and men's rigid adherence to restrictive, traditional gender roles (gender role strain) to the prediction of men's IPV acceptance attitudes. Chapters 1 and 2 posited (a) that researchers have yet to adequately explore the possible etiology of IPV acceptance attitudes, (b) that research efforts designed to understand IPV perpetration, such as those guided by adult attachment theory and the gender role strain paradigm, should be applied to predict men's acceptance of physical, psychological, and sexual violence toward women in relationships, and (c) that indirect evidence supported connections between adult attachment insecurity and men's rigid adherence to traditional role norms (i.e., gender role strain) and, in turn, IPV acceptance attitudes. Accordingly, the following four hypotheses were advanced: (H1) adult attachment dimensions will be positively related to attitudes condoning specific forms of IPV, (H2) adult attachment dimensions will be positively related to gender role strain, (H3) adult attachment dimensions will be positively related to masculine gender role strain, and (H4) adult attachment anxiety and avoidance will be indirectly related to IPV attitudes through gender role strain. Preliminary analyses and the primary SEM analysis supported the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships between adult attachment, gender role strain, and IPV acceptance attitudes.

#### **Direct and Bivariate Relationships**

The hypothesis that adult attachment dimensions would be positively related to acceptance of specific forms of IPV was fully supported. First, bivariate correlations



between indicators of attachment insecurity and physical, psychological, and sexual IPV acceptance attitudes were moderately correlated. Second, latent variables assessing adult attachment dimensions and a latent construct tapping psychological and sexual IPV acceptance attitudes were positively related in the final SEM measurement model.

Although the only previous study of attachment and IPV acceptance attitudes reported no significant correlations between these constructs (Feiring et al., 2002), the current findings are consistent with prior research of IPV perpetration and frequency.

Specifically, a variety of studies have reported similar relationships between adult attachment and perpetration of physical violence (Dumas et al., 2008; Dutton et al., 1994; Lawson, 2008; Mauricio & Lopez, 2009; Roberts & Noller, 1998), psychological violence (Dutton et al., 1994; Gormley & Lopez, 2010a, Gormley & Lopez, 2010b; Murphy & Hoover, 1999), and sexual violence (Abbey et al., 2007; Smallbone & Dadds, 2001).

The present findings addressed an important gap in the literature, as they offer evidence that men's insecure attachment may increase the likelihood of accepting physical, sexual, or psychological violence in a dating relationship. Additionally, latent attachment variables and a latent variable of men's psychological and sexual IPV acceptance were related even after controlling for socially desirable responding in the SEM analysis, offering additional evidence that these constructs are interrelated.

Furthermore, findings from prior investigations indicate that avoidance and anxiety may be differently related to specific forms of IPV. However, attachment avoidance and anxiety were both moderately correlated with acceptance of each form of violence (e.g., psychological, physical, and sexual) in the present study. This may indicate that, although

avoidance and anxiety have been differentially linked to specific forms of relational violence, attitudes condoning partner violence may share a general connection with attachment insecurity. Indeed, the current findings are consistent with attachment-driven explanations of IPV in relationships which emphasize violence stemming from attempts to manage attachment insecurity (e.g., Dutton 1998, 2007, Gormley, 2005; Sonkin & Dutton, 2003). Dutton (1998, 2007) and Gormley (2005) argued that anxious and avoidant individuals may be at a higher risk for IPV due to their respective needs to use violence as means of relational control and to manage attachment insecurity. In particular, Dutton (2007) concluded that anxious individuals become angry when they perceive their partners pulling away, and that they use violence to attenuate intense fears of abandonment. In contrast, avoidant individuals may use IPV to push partners away in order to control the level of intimacy in their relationship (Gormley, 2005).

In accordance with Gormley's (2005) and Dutton's (1998) explanations of IPV revolving around issues of relational control, adult attachment theory provides a possible explanation for the observed association between attachment dimensions and IPV acceptance attitudes. For instance, it is noteworthy that strong themes of dominance and control were evident in the IPV attitudes assessed in the current study (e.g., "A girl should do what her boyfriend tells her to do", "It is okay for a guy to badmouth his girlfriend", "If a guy pays for a date, it is okay for him to pressure his girlfriend to have sex", and "Girls who cheat on their boyfriends should be slapped"). Thus, men's fear of abandonment (i.e., attachment anxiety) may make acceptance of physical, sexual, and psychological dominance more attractive, as these beliefs may represent conscious or unconscious desires to prevent abandonment by violent control, forcing a partner into

sexual intimacy, or by denigrating the partner to prevent her from leaving the relationship. At the same time, controlling and dominating beliefs about women in dating relationships may also appeal to avoidantly attached men. Such beliefs may be indicative of behaviors designed to distance a woman from any vulnerable aspects of the man which might be visible if the relationship was more egalitarian. Therefore, the same mechanisms that increase the likelihood of IPV in insecurely attached men (i.e., a need for relational control) may also increase men's acceptance of IPV.

In addition to serving an attachment-related function of relational control, IPV acceptance attitudes may also appeal to a broader patriarchal need to maintain power over women (e.g., "A girl should ask her boyfriend first before going out with her friends", and "It is alright for a guy to force his girlfriend to kiss him"). Latent and manifest indicators of men's gender role strain were related to IPV acceptance attitudes in the current sample, indicating that men experiencing strain from rigid adherence to traditional male values also endorsed hegemonic beliefs about women in relationships. It is noteworthy, however, that relations between gender role strain and IPV acceptance attitudes were only significant for attitudes condoning sexual and psychological IPV but not for attitudes condoning physical IPV. In addition, including physical IPV acceptance attitudes in the SEM model resulted in numerous statistical problems, and it was ultimately necessary to remove them in order to continue the analysis. These findings are inconsistent with previous research demonstrating a connection between masculine gender role strain and IPV (Moore & Stuart, 2005; O'Neil, 2008) and warrant further clarification.

Two possible explanations for the lack of significant relationships between indicators of gender role strain in the preliminary analysis and the inability of the SEM model to run correctly when it included physical IPV acceptance in the primary analysis can be advanced. First, both indicators of physical IPV acceptance, AMDV Violence scores and IPVAS-R Violence scores, were severely skewed, indicating that most men in the present sample were not willing to endorse the use of physical violence in dating relationships. Significant negative correlations between indicators of physical IPV acceptance and social desirability also suggest that the socially desirable response for those items was to deny acceptance of physical violence. Such distribution and sample characteristics may have obscured any relationships between gender role strain and IPV acceptance attitudes in the preliminary analysis and violated the assumptions necessary for maximum likelihood estimation in the SEM analysis.

Second, the relationship may have been canceled out by moderating variables not assessed in the present study (e.g., history of IPV). In particular, previous research connecting gender role strain to physical IPV perpetration has primarily used samples of IPV offenders. Men with a history of IPV may be more likely to endorse acceptance of physical violence in relationships, possibly as a rationalization for their behavior (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Hanson et al., 1997). Although the current study did not gather information about a previous history of IPV, participants were all attending college and neither institutionalized nor incarcerated; hence, the level of IPV in the present sample was likely less severe than levels in an offender sample. Thus, future research should assess whether a history of IPV moderates the relationship between gender role strain and

acceptance of physical IPV in college student samples and might explain the non-significant findings in the current study.

Despite the absence of a relationship between gender role strain and physical IPV acceptance attitudes, it is noteworthy that adult attachment dimensions were moderately correlated with physical violence acceptance attitudes and gender role strain constructs. The present pattern of findings suggest that attachment insecurity, which corresponds with insecure motivations for relational control that may increase IPV in relationships (e.g., Dutton, 1998; Gormley, 2005), could be a better predictor of men's acceptance of physical violence compared to rigid adherence to traditional male roles. Additional research is needed in order to more clearly understand the relationships between attachment, gender role strain, and acceptance of using physical violence in relationships.

### **Indirect and Mediating Relationships**

The current study did not provide evidence linking gender role strain to acceptance of physical violence. However, the results suggest that men's gender role strain is an important factor in understanding attitudes toward psychological and sexual violence in relationships. Particularly, the hypothesis that gender role strain would mediate the associations between attachment dimensions and IPV acceptance attitudes was supported by the Structural Regression (SR) model. First, a mediated structural model was a better fit to the data than a model with no mediation. Second, a partially mediated model produced adequate fit indices. Third, the bootstrap procedure yielded significant indirect effects between attachment and IPV acceptance attitudes through gender role strain. More precisely, the relationship between attachment anxiety and acceptance of psychological and sexual IPV was fully mediated by gender role strain, and

the relationship between attachment avoidance and IPV acceptance attitudes was partially mediated by gender role strain.

The finding that gender role strain completely mediated the relationship between attachment anxiety and acceptance of psychological and sexual IPV is particularly noteworthy. This result offers further support for attachment-related explanations of men's gender role strain and IPV. For example, researchers have offered conceptual arguments and provided empirical findings indicating that men are socialized to prematurely separate from their mothers (Pollack, 1995, 2004), thus setting the stage for anxious attachment issues later in life and potentially creating negative attitudes toward women (Blazina & Watkins, 2000). Investigators have also demonstrated that negative interpersonal consequences associated with gender role strain, such as dominance in intimate relationships, can be traced back to broader attachment-related views of self and other (Mahalik et al., 2005). Given that anxiously attached men are plagued by pervasive fears of abandonment, possibly created by early attachment issues which have lead to the devaluation of the feminine, anxiously attached men may be more likely to identify rigidly with traditional male roles rooted in patriarchal views of women in problematic ways. More precisely, anxiously attached men may overly identify with traditional male values because they provide a sense of control and, in part, may offer some degree of protection from fears of abandonment. Traditional male values, in turn, because they are rooted in sexism and dominance over women, may consciously or unconsciously surface in relationships as attitudes that sexual and verbal violence is acceptable. Therefore, the present findings suggest that problematic over-identification and rigid adherence to

traditional male values may be a necessary ingredient in transforming anxious attachment into beliefs condoning sexual and verbal abuse in relationships.

The finding that gender role strain partially mediated the relationship between attachment avoidance and IPV acceptance attitudes is equally important. Although a fully mediated structural model did not fit as well as a partially mediated model, the presence of significant indirect effects suggests that aspects of attachment avoidance were focused through gender role strain in order to connect to IPV acceptance attitudes. This result is consistent with attachment theory and with previously established connections of attachment constructs to gender role strain. In addition, it provides further evidence that attachment insecurity may predispose men toward rigid adherence to traditional male roles that, in turn, lead to harmful interpersonal beliefs.

Attachment avoidance is manifested as a general fear and discomfort with intimacy in relationships and a compulsive need for self-reliance. Concurrently, a central component of masculine role strain is rigid adherence to the belief that men should avoid any feminine expressions of emotion (e.g., showing emotional vulnerability). As such, traditional male values emphasizing emotional stoicism and power over women may be particularly appealing to avoidantly attached men. Additionally, consistent with Gormley's (2005) attachment-driven explanation of IPV, avoidantly attached men may be more accepting of psychological and sexual violence in relationships, as these behaviors represent ways of controlling emotional and physical intimacy. Given that gender role strain partially mediated this relationship, the current findings also suggest that insecurely attached men are likely to rigidly identify with traditional male roles, which, in turn, also increases the likelihood of accepting psychological and sexual dating

violence. At the same time, however, some avoidantly attached men may be accepting of IPV in relationships irrespective of their endorsement of traditional role norms.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Several important methodological limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the results of this study. First, the study used a convenience sample of heterosexual men who voluntarily agreed to participate. Given the sensitive nature of the study, it is possible that certain men were unwilling to participate thus biasing the sample in unknown ways. Moreover, the sample did not consist of any known IPV offenders, and no data on actual IPV frequency were obtained. Future research, therefore, should address these important limitations by exploring the connections between attachment, gender role strain, and IPV acceptance attitudes in an offender sample of partner-violent men and should extend the findings to non-heterosexual relationships.

Second, as the study exclusively used self-report data, its findings are vulnerable to mono-method bias. Self-report data has the potential to be skewed by socially desirable responding affects. Although socially desirable response bias was statistically controlled in the measurement and structural models, there is still the possibility that people did not answer survey items honestly, and that no amount of statistical control could account for those misrepresentations. Relatedly, the level of IPV acceptance was relatively low in the present sample, possibly due to socially desirable response bias. Future investigations should take the present limitations into account by exploring IPV acceptance via approaches that do not rely solely on self-report questionnaire methods. For example, implicit association tests (e.g., Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) could be used to examine acceptance of IPV at an unconscious level. Likewise, peer or partner ratings



may provide a different picture of man's IPV acceptance than provided by self-report questionnaires alone. Indeed, the present study is also limited in that it only provides data from one side of the relationship. Partner reports of IPV acceptance attitudes, in conjunction with both partners' self-reported IPV acceptance attitudes may provide a clearer picture of men and women's acceptance of violence in relationships.

Third, the present results only represent a cross-sectional glimpse of these constructs. Although relatively stable over time, attachment orientations are not completely static (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Given the study's single-time-point design, inferences about the temporal nature of attachment dimensions and their influence on IPV acceptance attitudes are not possible. The lack of longitudinal data is especially limiting in terms of interpreting a mediation effect. Subsequent investigations of IPV acceptance attitudes and attachment should attempt to use longitudinal designs in order to address this limitation and to make more definitive assessments about the temporal order of these relationships.

Fourth, the correlational design of the present study further constrains judgments of causality. As previously mentioned, this limits the ability to adequately interpret mediation paths. Although theory suggests that insecure adult attachment may increase men's propensity to adhere to rigid traditional gender roles (Mahalik et al., 2005), without experimental evidence, these correlations should not be interpreted as indicative of causal relationships. Rather, it is possible that additional variables, not measured in the current study, may be the real causative factors.

Fifth, it is noteworthy that several statistical adjustments were made to the raw data before completing the primary SEM analysis. Specifically, missing data were

substituted, and skewed scores were transformed. These procedures limit the current findings. Additionally, none of the IPV violence acceptance scores were retained for the primary SEM analysis, and all subscales of the IPVAS-R were severely skewed, causing significant problems in the SEM model. Although the IPVAS-R produced adequate reliability estimates in the current sample and demonstrated adequate psychometric properties in a similar sample (Fincham et al., 2008), the wording of certain scale items may lead to biased responding. Additional research may be needed in order establish the utility of this instrument, and future researchers should be aware of this potential limitation.

Lastly, SEM findings may not be generalizable and should not be interpreted as universal truths (Kline, 2005). Future researchers should attempt to replicate and expand the present mediated model. For instance, the results indicate that attachment and gender role strain work together to increase IPV acceptance, but the specific aspects of insecure attachment and gender role strain linked to IPV attitudes remain unclear. This leaves many potential areas for future research, especially considering that IPV acceptance attitudes may have cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Therefore, it is not clear if IPV acceptance attitudes are a product of the faulty affect regulation strategies that insecurely attached individuals and traditional men may have in common (e.g., anger and emotional stoicism), are the consequence of previous IPV behaviors stemming from insecure attachments and gender role strain, or are a combination of other cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of insecure attachment and traditional male socialization. Although the present study has taken the initial steps by connecting these

constructs for the first time, further investigations could help clarify these relationships and may provide additional information for future prevention and intervention efforts.

### **Clinical Implications**

Despite being an important focus of IPV prevention efforts in adolescent and college student populations, very little is known about the social and relational correlates of IPV acceptance attitudes. The present study makes a substantive contribution to the literature by connecting IPV acceptance attitudes to adult attachment dimensions and gender role strain within a sample of college men. These findings have potential importance for prevention and early intervention.

The CDC (2004) recommended a four-step approach to prevention of violence in relationships: (step 1) identify the problem, (step 2) understand the risk factors, (step 3) develop and evaluate prevention approaches, and (step 4) apply evidence-based practices at a macro level. As Chapters 1 and 2 of the present study demonstrated, researchers have identified the problem (step 1), and investigations have yielded evidence indicating that IPV acceptance attitudes are an important predictor of IPV (step 2). Step 4 has also been attempted, as researchers have tried, and have been occasionally successful, to develop evidence-based prevention efforts on college campuses (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007). However, in a recent CDC-commissioned review of sexual violence prevention efforts, the authors concluded that many programs contain a strong focus on social explanations of sexual IPV (e.g., traditional gender roles), and that the result of sexual violence prevention programs have been mixed (Vivolo et al., 2010). Similarly mixed findings have been identified in reviews of prevention programs of various forms of IPV in adolescent and college populations (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007).

Although focusing heavily on the social contributors of IPV may not be very efficacious, some researchers continue advocating and utilizing methods that target IPV acceptance attitudes primarily through education designed to counteract socialized beliefs about violence in relationships. For instance, Fincham et al. (2008) discussed the importance of changing IPV attitudes on college campuses through targeted education, providing facts, and giving helpful advice. Similarly, many violence prevention programs focus on changing IPV attitudes through education and peer groups (Foshee et al., 2005). Given the connections between IPV attitudes and IPV perpetration, such programs do have merit; however, they may also be limited in focus. The present findings indicate that combining social and individual-level explanations for IPV acceptance provides a clearer picture of why men may accept sexual and verbal violence in relationships than examining either factor alone. More importantly, clinicians and future researchers now have a starting point for including gender role strain constructs and adult attachment dimensions into new or existing violence prevention programs aimed toward reducing harmful IPV attitudes in men.

IPV prevention programs might also consider using the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of adult attachment dimensions and gender role strain to identify specific avenues for attitude change that resonate with insecurely attached, traditional men. For example, asking heterosexual men if they believe it is okay to hit a woman may, as was the case in the present study, return a number of vehement denials. Indeed, it is important to note that the level of acceptance of IPV in the present sample of college men was modest. Still, there was enough variability in their responses to produce meaningful relationships between IPV acceptance attitudes, gender role strain, and attachment

dimensions. As such, asking more attachment-oriented questions to men, such as if they feel angry or powerless when their female partners pull away from them, or if they feel uncomfortable when their partners cling to them, may lead to a richer discussion of relationship dynamics and the possible instances in which violence could occur by opening up possibilities for considering alternative approaches for dealing with this discomfort. In other words, rather than simply explaining to men that violence in relationships is wrong, which most may already acknowledge publicly, helping men understand the reasons they might become violent may be a more productive approach. Because the present study suggests that adult attachment may predispose men toward rigid adherence to traditional role norms which, in turn, are associated with acceptance of IPV, primary prevention efforts could focus on helping men become more self-aware of their attachment propensities in relationships and how this might impact their views of women and power in the relationship. Additionally prevention programs could help men identify ways to communicate with their partners that could relieve attachment distress in a more positive fashion and help them understand that “real men” can be vulnerable.

By focusing on the interpersonal dynamics associated with experiences of attachment insecurity clinicians could also help men shed many of the restrictive gender roles that are attractive to insecurely attached men. For instance, helping men deconstruct and analyze what they have been taught about how to be a man may lead to important self-understanding and awareness and less rigidity in one's beliefs about masculinity. The present results suggest that interventions designed to help men develop a healthier, less rigid approach to the masculine role may, in turn, lead to less acceptance of intimate partner violence. In sum, integrative therapeutic efforts aimed at both

deconstructing gender roles and heightening men's awareness of their attachment patterns in relationships may hold promise in helping men realize and correct their conscious or unconscious views of their relationships with women before they potentiate actual IPV behaviors.

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